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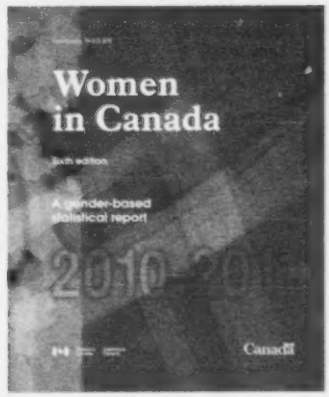
Article

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women



by Vivian O'Donnell and Susan Wallace

July 2011

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Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

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First Nations, Métis and Inuit women

by Vivian O'Donnell and Susan Wallace

Introduction

Aboriginal women share many of the same challenges and concerns as other women in Canada. However, demographically, culturally and socioeconomically, Aboriginal women are also a unique population. There is also much diversity within the Aboriginal population. Broadly speaking, Aboriginal people can be considered as three distinct groups: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and Inuit. Within each of these groups are many distinct cultural groups. This chapter will explore some of the unique characteristics of the Aboriginal female population, and examine how things have been changing over time.

Aboriginal population definition

There are various ways to define the Aboriginal population depending on the focus and the requirements of the data user. This article focuses on the Aboriginal identity population. Aboriginal identity refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act of Canada*, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation. Data are presented for each of the three Aboriginal identity groups: Inuit, Métis and First Nations (North American Indian).[1] In some tables, data are also presented for the Status Indian population. The term 'First Nations' is used throughout the article to refer to people who identified as North American Indian and includes both Status and non-Status Indians. In this article, the Aboriginal female population is also referred to as 'Aboriginal women and girls'.

1. It was possible to report both single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question. Census data used in this paper for First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and Inuit are based on the single responses only. Aboriginal Peoples Survey and Aboriginal Children's Survey data represent a combination of both the single and multiple Aboriginal identity populations. As an example, the Métis data findings include those who were identified as Métis only and those identified as Métis in combination with another Aboriginal group (for example, Métis and First Nations [North American Indian]).

A growing population

In 2006, there were 600,695 Aboriginal females in Canada. Aboriginal women and girls made up 4% of the total Canadian female population that year (Table 1).

Table 1
Aboriginal population, Canada, 2006

Aboriginal population	Females		Males		Females as a % of the Aboriginal group
	number	%	number	%	
Total — Aboriginal identity population	**600,695**	**100.0**	**572,095**	**100.0**	**51.2**
First Nations	359,975	59.9	338,050	59.1	51.6
Métis	196,280	32.7	193,500	33.8	50.4
Inuit	25,455	4.2	25,025	4.4	50.4
Multiple Aboriginal identities	4,055	0.7	3,685	0.6	52.4
Other	14,930	2.5	11,830	2.1	55.8

Notes: 'First Nations' refers to those who identified as 'North American Indian' (includes both Status and non-Status Indians).
'Multiple Aboriginal identities' refers to those who reported belonging to more than one Aboriginal group (First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit). 'Other' includes those who did not affiliate with an Aboriginal group but who have Registered Indian status and/or band membership.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

In 2006, 60% of the Aboriginal female population reported being First Nations (includes both Status and non-Status Indians), while 33% were Métis and 4% were Inuit. The remaining 3% either reported belonging to more than one Aboriginal group, or they did not identify with an Aboriginal group, but reported having Registered Indian status and/or band membership (Table 1).

Table 2
Aboriginal female population, by province or territory, Canada, 2006

Province/territory	Total Aboriginal population — Both sexes	Total — Aboriginal female population	First Nations women and girls	Métis women and girls	Inuit women and girls	Other Aboriginal responses[1]	As a % of female population that is Aboriginal in each region
	number						
Canada	**1,172,790**	**600,695**	**359,975**	**196,280**	**25,455**	**18,985**	**3.8**
Newfoundland and Labrador	23,450	11,930	3,945	3,305	2,350	2,330	4.6
Prince Edward Island	1,730	970	660	240	20	35	1.4
Nova Scotia	24,175	12,405	7,915	3,740	185	565	2.7
New Brunswick	17,655	9,010	6,570	1,815	110	505	2.4
Quebec	108,430	54,905	33,395	13,680	5,480	2,345	1.4
Ontario	242,495	124,900	82,440	36,580	1,095	4,780	2.0
Manitoba	175,395	89,675	51,930	36,190	280	1,270	15.6
Saskatchewan	141,890	72,325	46,940	24,175	105	1,105	14.9
Alberta	188,365	96,625	50,050	43,515	815	2,240	5.9
British Columbia	196,075	101,215	66,390	30,850	460	3,515	4.9
Yukon	7,580	3,915	3,245	400	155	115	26.1
Northwest Territories	20,635	10,475	6,430	1,720	2,190	130	52.1
Nunavut	24,920	12,355	50	65	12,210	25	86.2

1. The category 'Other Aboriginal responses' includes those who reported belonging to more than one Aboriginal group (First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit) and those who did not affiliate with an Aboriginal group but who have Registered Indian status and/or band membership.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

The female Aboriginal population is growing much more rapidly than the rest of the female population in Canada. In the period from 1996 to 2006, the number of Aboriginal females rose by 45%, compared to a 9% growth rate in the non-Aboriginal female population.[2]

Of the three groups of Aboriginal women, the Métis population increased the most from 1996 to 2006: a growth of 91% growth for Métis, 30% for First Nations, and 27% for Inuit. The growth of the Métis population is due not only to factors such as high birth rates and improved enumeration, but also because an increasing number of people are newly reporting Métis identity. (See the text box: 'Ethnic mobility' and the growth of the Métis population.)

As with the overall population, women make up the slight majority of Aboriginal people in Canada. In 2006, women made up 51% of the total Aboriginal population. That year, 52% of the total First Nations population in Canada was female, while the figure was around 50% for both the Métis and Inuit groups (Table 1).

2. When comparisons are made to 1996, 2006 data have been adjusted to account for the addition of some Indian reserves and settlements that were incompletely enumerated in 1996. That is, only those Indian reserves that were enumerated in both census years (2006 and 1996) were included.

'Ethnic mobility' and the growth of the Métis population

It is clear that increasing numbers of Canadians are newly reporting Aboriginal identity on the census over time. This phenomenon is captured by the term 'ethnic mobility'. The concept of ethnic mobility has been identified as a major contributor to the high growth rate of the Aboriginal population in general and the Métis population in particular.[3] It is difficult to identify precisely the reasons that more people are identifying as Métis over time. One factor may include increased awareness of Métis issues as a result of recent judicial decisions regarding the Aboriginal rights of the Métis (for example, the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in R. v. Powley, 2003).

Indian status

The *Indian Act* defines an Indian as 'a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.' The federal government maintains an official list of Status Indians called the Indian Register. Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.

In 2006, a majority of those who identified as First Nations people were registered under the *Indian Act*. In 2006, almost 292,000 First Nations females, 81% of the total, were registered, as were 81% of First Nations males. The remaining First Nations people who do not have Registered Indian status are often referred to as 'non-Status Indians'.

Because Registered Indian status is a legal concept, the number of Status Indians has been affected by changes to legislation throughout history. For example, significant growth in the Status Indian population in recent decades has been not only the result of factors such as longer life expectancy, high birth rates, and improved enumeration, but also due to legislative changes to the *Indian Act* (see text box: Bill C-31 and Bill C-3).

In 1981, the Status Indian population was 289,175. It had increased to 385,805 by 1991 and to 558,175 in 2001. In 2006, the Status Indian population had reached 623,780 (Table 3).[4]

3. Guimond, É. 2003. 'Fuzzy Definitions and Population Explosions: Changing Identities of Aboriginal Groups in Canada.' *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*. D. Newhouse and E. Peters (eds.). Policy Research Initiative, p. 35-49.
4. The number of Registered Indians recorded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Indian Register differs from Statistics Canada's census counts of Registered Indians. These two data sources do not count Registered Indians in the same way or for the same purpose. The Indian Register is an administrative database, while the census is a statistical survey. For more information, see '2006 Census: A decade of comparable data on Aboriginal Peoples', http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/info/aboriginal-autochtones-eng.cfm.

Table 3
Status Indian population, by area of residence, Canada, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2006

Area of residence	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006	Growth rate from 1981 to 2006 (%)
	number					
On reserve	**170,055**	**184,710**	**227,285**	**274,215**	**299,970**	**76.4**
Female	82,220	89,660	110,335	135,030	148,185	80.2
Male	87,835	95,055	116,950	139,185	151,785	72.8
Off reserve	**119,120**	**201,090**	**260,755**	**283,955**	**323,815**	**171.8**
Female	64,180	111,225	142,490	154,715	174,760	172.3
Male	54,940	89,870	118,265	129,245	149,050	171.3
Total — On and off reserve	**289,175**	**385,805**	**488,040**	**558,175**	**623,780**	**115.7**
Female	146,400	200,885	252,830	289,745	322,945	120.6
Male	142,770	184,920	235,210	268,430	300,835	110.7

Notes: These counts are from the Census of Population. The number of Status Indians recorded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Indian Register differs from Statistics Canada's census counts of Status Indians. These two data sources do not count Status Indians in the same way or for the same purpose. The Indian Register is an administrative database, while the census is a statistical survey. (For more information, see '2006 Census: A decade of comparable data on Aboriginal Peoples' at http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/info/aboriginal-autochtones-eng.cfm).

Note that growth rates may be affected by the improved enumeration of Indian reserves and settlements in the census over time.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Projections from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) indicate that the Status Indian population will continue to grow, although the rate of growth is expected to decrease over time. Decreases are expected to occur because of declining fertility and loss of registration entitlement among a growing number of descendents of Status Indians.[5] It is important to note that INAC's projections were released prior to the creation of Bill C-3: Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act (see text box: Bill C-31 and Bill C-3).

5. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2007. *Aboriginal Demography: Population, Household and Family Projections, 2001-2026.* (Catalogue: R3-62/2007), p. 24.

Bill C-31 and Bill C-3

The Status Indian population has undergone dramatic increases in the past couple of decades. A significant part of this growth can be attributed to legislative changes. In particular, the *Indian Act* was amended in 1985 through Bill C-31 to redress certain provisions in the *Indian Act* that discriminated against women. Prior to the 1985 amendments, Status Indian women who married non-Status men lost their Registered Indian status. As well, these women could no longer pass Registered Indian status on to their children. The opposite was true for Status Indian men. Non-status women who married Status Indian men were automatically conferred Indian status.[6]

Bill C-31 amendments allowed many women and their children to reclaim Indian status, and, in some cases, their First Nation (band) membership. Others who had voluntarily or involuntarily lost their Indian status through other provisions of the *Indian Act* could also apply to have their status restored. By the end of 2002, more than 114,000 individuals had been added to the Registered Indian population through these provisions.[7]

Bill C-31 also introduced new inheritance rules regarding the passing of Registered Indian status from parents to children. Both parents must have Registered Indian status to pass Indian status on to their children. An exception occurs when at least one parent has been registered under section 6(1) of the legislation. In this case, if one parent is registered under 6(1) and the other parent is not registered, children remain eligible for registration under section 6(2). However, a parent registered under 6(2) cannot pass Registered Indian status to a child unless the other parent is also a Status Indian.

Bill C-31 provided that the children of women who had lost status through marriage to a non-Indian under the previous rules were re-instated under section 6(2). In effect, the cut-off for passing on Indian status would come a generation earlier for grandchildren of Indian women who had out-married than the grandchildren of Indian men who had out-married. A court challenge by Sharon McIvor, on the basis of equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, resulted in the Supreme Court of British Columbia ordering the Government of Canada to revise the *Indian Act* to include these grandchildren. The Government of Canada has created Bill C-3: Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act to make these revisions. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada estimates that as a result of this legislation approximately 45,000 persons will become newly entitled to registration.[8]

6. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2010. *Existing Indian Act Provisions*. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/br/is/bll/hst/exi-eng.asp (accessed March 29, 2011).
7. Clatworthy, S. 2007. 'Indian Registration, Membership, and Population Changes in First Nations Communities.' *Aboriginal Policy Research Volume V: Moving Forward, Making a Difference*. J. P. White, S. Wingert, D. Beavon, and P. Maxim (eds.), p. 99-120.
8. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2011. *History of Bill C-3*, http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/br/is/bll/hst/index-eng.asp (accessed March 29 2011).

Distribution of Aboriginal women across the country

Of the provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan have the largest proportion of Aboriginal females out of the overall female populations. In 2006, Aboriginal women and girls made up 16% of all females in Manitoba and 15% of all females in Saskatchewan, while the figure was 6% in Alberta, 5% in both British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador, and 3% or less in the remaining provinces (Table 2).

Aboriginal females make up much larger shares of the population living in the territories. In 2006, more than half (52%) of females in the Northwest Territories and 26% of those in the Yukon were Aboriginal women and girls. In Nunavut, 86% of women and girls were Inuit (Table 2).[9]

In terms of actual numbers, however, Ontario has the largest number of Aboriginal females. In 2006, there were 124,900 Aboriginal women and girls in Ontario. That year, 21% of all Aboriginal females lived in Ontario, while 17% resided in British Columbia, 16% lived in Alberta, 15% in Manitoba, 12% in Saskatchewan, 9% in Québec, and 5% in the Atlantic Provinces. The remaining 5% of the female Aboriginal population lived in one of the territories (Table 2).

There is also considerable variation in the distribution of females in the different Aboriginal groups across the country. In 2006, the largest share of First Nations women and girls lived in Ontario (23%), while Alberta was home to the largest share of Métis females (22%) and almost half (48%) of Inuit women and girls lived in Nunavut.

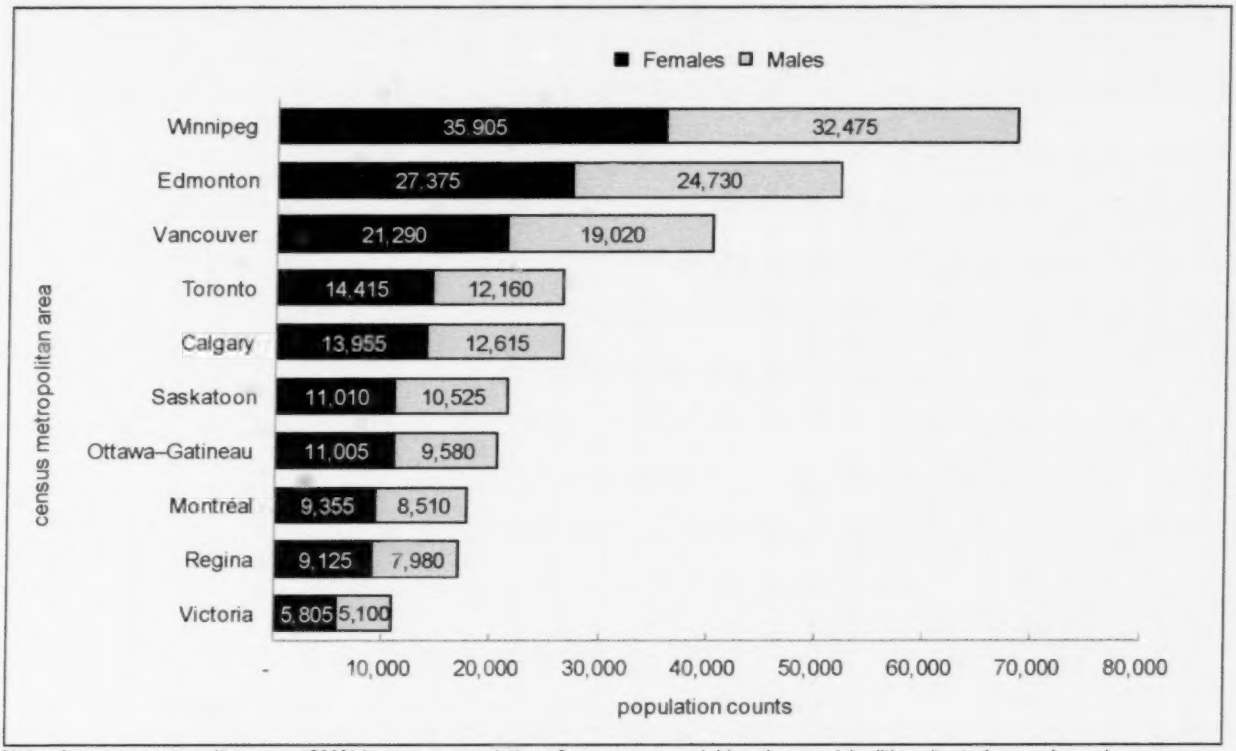
Living in census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

In Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs), the largest concentrations of Aboriginal females were found in Winnipeg, Saskatoon and, Regina.[10] In 2006, 10% of the total female population in Winnipeg was Aboriginal, as was 9% of that in each of Saskatoon and Regina. Aboriginal women and girls also accounted for 5% of the female population in Edmonton.

Winnipeg had the largest number of Aboriginal women and girls. In 2006, there were almost 36,000 Aboriginal females living in Winnipeg, while there were 27,375 Aboriginal females living in Edmonton, 21,290 in Vancouver, and approximately 14,000 each in Toronto and Calgary (Chart 1).

9. A relatively small proportion (about 1%) of women and girls in Nunavut belonged to the other Aboriginal groups (First Nations and Métis).
10. A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major core area. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.

Chart 1
Aboriginal population in selected census metropolitan areas, Canada, 2006



Note: A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major core area. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

In each of the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) listed in chart 1, a slight majority of Aboriginal residents were female. For example, in Toronto, 54% of Aboriginal residents were female. In Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa–Gatineau, Regina and Victoria, 53% of Aboriginal residents were female. It was also the case that among non-Aboriginal residents of these CMAs, females were in the majority.

Table 4
Female population, by Aboriginal identity, selected census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, Canada, 2006

Selected census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations	Total — Female population	Total — Aboriginal female population	As a % of total female population	First Nations female population	As a % of total female population	Métis female population	As a % of total female population	Non-Aboriginal female population	As a % of total female population
Census metropolitan area									
Winnipeg	351,975	35,905	10	14,350	4	20,735	6	316,070	90
Edmonton	515,525	27,375	5	11,965	2	14,380	3	488,155	95
Vancouver	1,072,920	21,290	2	12,475	1	7,835	1	1,051,635	98
Toronto	2,602,990	14,415	1	9,365	0	4,065	0	2,588,575	99
Calgary	536,530	13,955	3	5,800	1	7,705	1	522,575	97
Saskatoon	118,480	11,010	9	6,125	5	4,665	4	107,465	91
Ottawa–Gatineau	573,420	11,005	2	5,885	1	4,135	1	562,415	98
Montréal	1,843,990	9,355	1	5,365	0	3,025	0	1,834,640	99
Regina	99,395	9,125	9	5,260	5	3,625	4	90,270	91
Victoria	169,645	5,805	3	3,535	2	1,975	1	163,840	97
Census agglomeration									
Prince Albert	20,865	7,130	34	3,605	17	3,445	17	13,735	66
Prince George	41,175	4,520	11	2,280	6	2,045	5	36,655	89
Sault Ste. Marie	40,815	4,100	10	2,515	6	1,515	4	36,720	90
Kamloops	46,860	3,800	8	2,270	5	1,415	3	43,055	92
Grande Prairie	34,620	3,250	9	1,380	4	1,785	5	31,370	91
Wood Buffalo	24,385	3,105	13	1,620	7	1,250	5	21,280	87
Chilliwack	40,925	2,940	7	2,025	5	800	2	37,980	93
Nanaimo	46,845	2,810	6	1,775	4	895	2	44,035	94
Thompson	6,600	2,645	40	1,760	27	810	12	3,955	60
Prince Rupert	6,660	2,605	39	2,380	36	95	1	4,055	61

Note: A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major core area. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.
A census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centered on a large core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

In 2006, the census agglomerations (CAs) with the largest female Aboriginal populations were Prince Albert (7,130), Prince George (4,520) and Sault Ste Marie (4,100) (Table 4).[11] The Aboriginal women and girls make up between 34% and 40% of the female population of Thompson, Prince Rupert and Prince Albert. As of a percentage of total female population, Aboriginal women and girls often make up a larger proportion of the female populations in CAs as compared to CMAs.

There are small numbers of Inuit women and girls in many CMAs and CAs. The CMA with the largest female Inuit population was Ottawa–Gatineau, with a population of 410 women and girls, while Yellowknife and Whitehorse were the CAs with the largest Inuit population (405 and 135 women and girls, respectively). The Inuit population makes up small proportions of most CMAs and CAs. For example, Inuit women formed 0.1% of the population of Ottawa–Gatineau. It was only in Yellowknife and Whitehorse where Inuit women and girls formed more than 1% of the female population (data not shown).

11. A census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centered on a large core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000.

Living in rural areas

In 2006, Métis women were the most likely of the three Aboriginal groups to live in rural areas.[12] That year, 28% of Métis females and 12% of First Nations women lived in rural areas (not including reserves). That same year, 5% of Inuit women lived in rural areas (outside of Inuit Nunangat) and 18% of non-Aboriginal women lived in rural areas.

Living on reserve

Generally speaking, only Status Indians are eligible to reside on reserve. In 2006, less than half (46%) of Status Indian females were living on reserve, making Status Indian women slightly less likely than their male counterparts to live on a reserve. That year, 50% of Status Indian males resided on a reserve (Table 5).

In 2006, there were a total of 169,480 women and girls living on a reserve (Status and non-Status included), representing less than half (49%) of the on-reserve population.

Table 5
Area of residence of the First Nations population, Status Indian population and non-Status Indian population, by sex, Canada, 2006

Area of residence	First Nations population		Status Indian population		Non-Status Indian population		Non-Aboriginal population	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total population	**698,025**	**100.0**	**623,780**	**100.0**	**133,155**	**100.0**	**30,068,240**	**100.0**
On reserve	300,755	43.1	299,965	48.1	4,645	3.5	34,375	0.1
Off reserve	397,265	56.9	323,815	51.9	128,510	96.5	30,033,865	99.9
Females	**359,970**	**100.0**	**322,945**	**100.0**	**68,300**	**100.0**	**15,314,070**	**100.0**
On reserve	148,255	41.2	148,185	45.9	2,200	3.2	17,270	0.1
Off reserve	211,715	58.8	174,760	54.1	66,100	96.8	15,296,800	99.9
Males	**338,050**	**100.0**	**300,835**	**100.0**	**64,860**	**100.0**	**14,754,175**	**100.0**
On reserve	152,500	45.1	151,785	50.5	2,445	3.8	17,110	0.1
Off reserve	185,550	54.9	149,050	49.5	62,415	96.2	14,737,065	99.9

Notes: The category 'Total First Nations' includes those who identified as North American Indian (includes both Status and non-Status Indians). 'Status Indians' includes those with Registered Indian status even if they did not identify as First Nations (North American Indian). 'Non-status Indians' includes all women and children who identified as First Nations (North American Indian) but who did not have Registered Indian status. The numbers given for the Status Indian population in Table 5 may not match the counts given in Table 3 due to rounding procedures.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

12. For a definition of 'rural' please see http://www.statcan.gc.ca/subjects-sujets/standard-norme/sgc-cgt/urban-urbain-eng.htm (accessed May 27, 2011).

Living in Inuit Nunangat

The 2006 Census enumerated 50,485 Inuit living in Canada; over three-quarters (78%) lived in the area known as Inuit Nunangat. Inuit Nunangat is comprised of four regions created through the signing of land claims agreements and from west to east includes the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik north of the 55th parallel in Quebec and Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador (Table 6).

Table 6
Area of residence of Inuit, Canada, 2006

Area of residence	Total population		Female		Male	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total Inuit	**50,485**	**100.0**	**25,455**	**100.0**	**25,025**	**100.0**
Inuit Nunangat (Inuit regions)	**39,480**	**78.2**	**19,540**	**76.8**	**19,940**	**79.7**
Nunatsiavut	2,155	4.3	1,050	4.1	1,110	4.4
Nunavik	9,570	19.0	4,725	18.6	4,845	19.4
Nunavut	24,635	48.8	12,215	48.0	12,425	49.7
Inuvialuit region	3,120	6.2	1,555	6.1	1,565	6.3
Outside of Inuit Nunangat	**11,005**	**21.8**	**5,920**	**23.3**	**5,085**	**20.3**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Overall there were 19,540 Inuit women and girls living in Inuit Nunangat in 2006. The proportion of Inuit females living within Inuit Nunangat decreased from 82% in 1996 to 77% in 2006.

The region with the largest Inuit female population was the territory of Nunavut, home to 12,215 Inuit females (Table 6).

A relatively young population

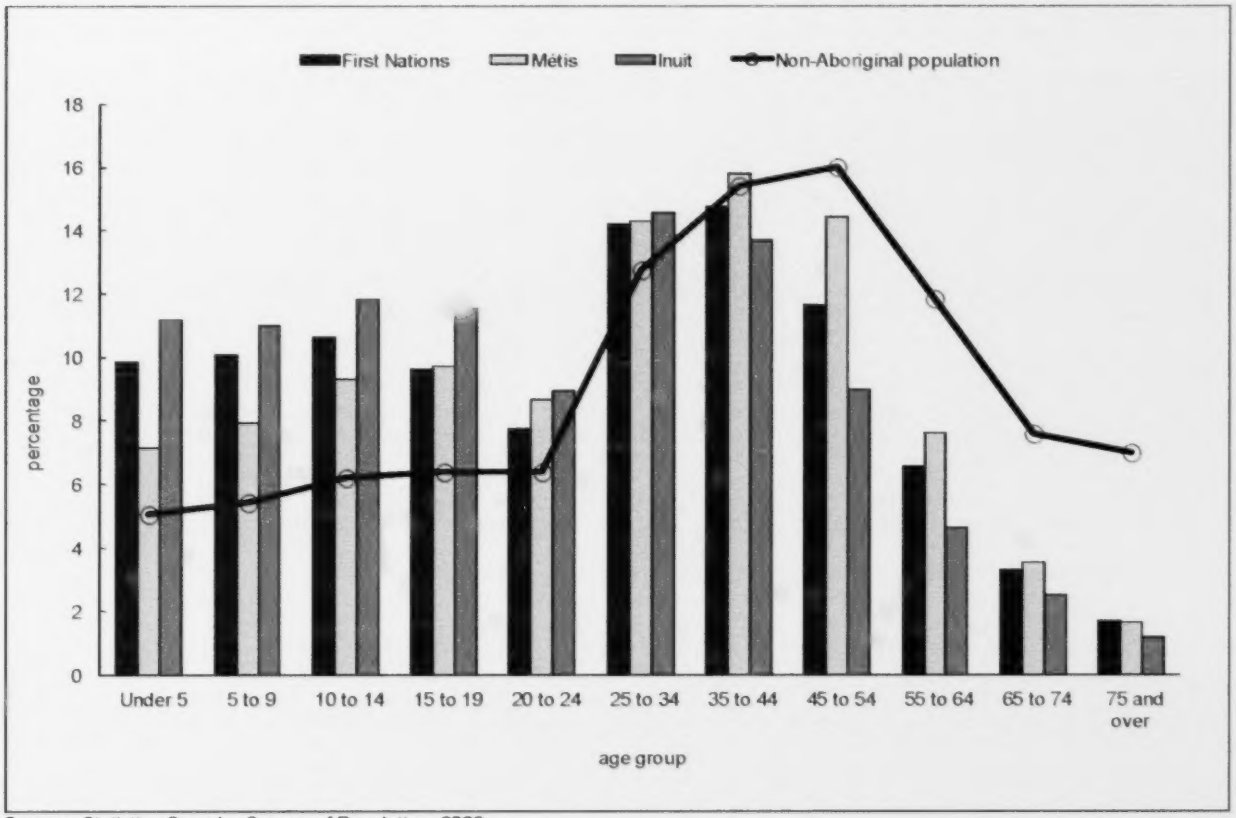
The Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, the median age of Aboriginal females was 27.7 years, compared with 40.5 years for non-Aboriginal females, a gap of almost 13 years. (The median age is the point where exactly one-half of the population is older, and the other half is younger.)

Of the three Aboriginal groups, Inuit are the youngest. The median age of Inuit women and girls was 22.3 years, compared to 26.4 years for First Nations females, and 29.9 years for Métis females.

In 2006, almost half (46%) of Aboriginal females were children and youth; 28% of the female Aboriginal population were under 15 years of age, and 18% were aged 15 to 24.

Among the Inuit female population, about one-third (34%) were under the age of 15, while the figure was 31% among First Nations females and 24% among the Métis female population (Chart 2). (For more information, see the text box entitled 'Aboriginal girls and teens'.)

Chart 2
Age structure of the female population, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Senior Aboriginal women

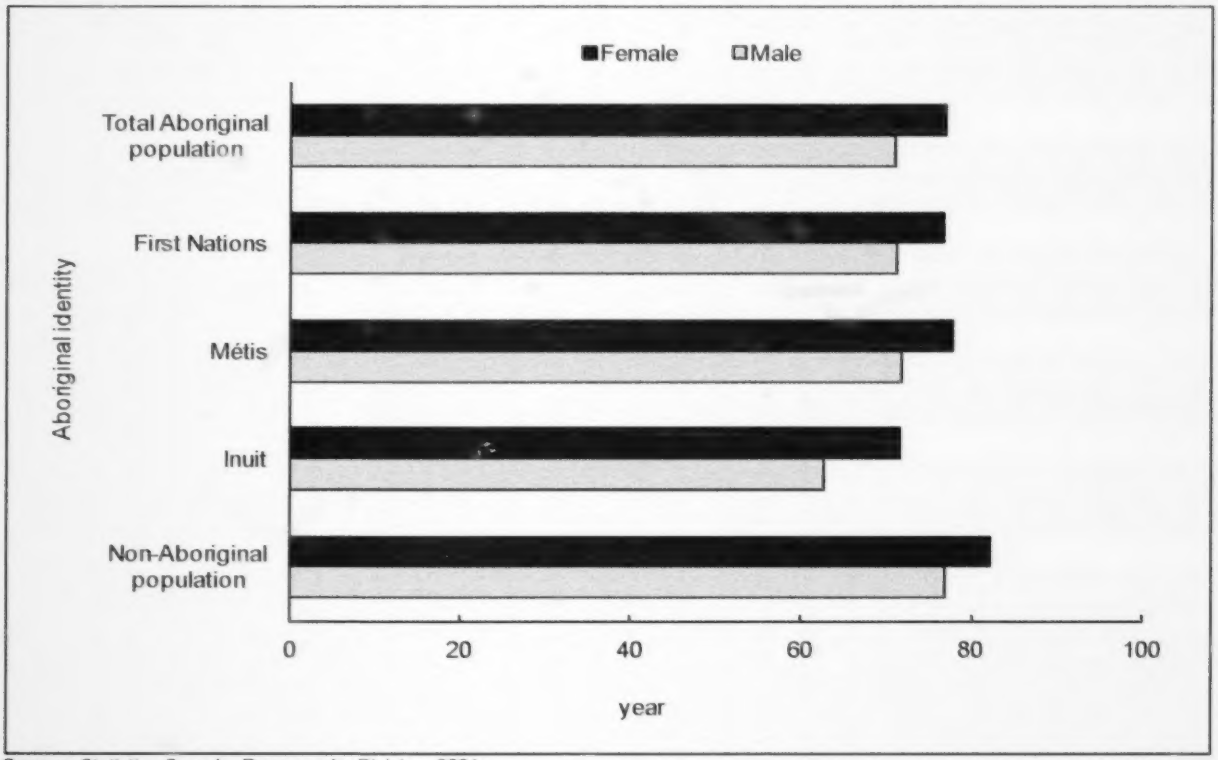
The Aboriginal population continues to be a relatively young population, compared to the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, 5% of Aboriginal women were aged 65 and over, compared with 15% of non-Aboriginal women. However, the number of Aboriginal senior women, while relatively small, doubled between 1996 and 2006, while the number of senior women in the non-Aboriginal population increased 20%.

As with the non-Aboriginal population, women account for the majority of Aboriginal seniors. In 2006, 55% of all Aboriginal people aged 65 and over were female. In particular, women made up 56% of First Nations seniors, and 51% of Métis and Inuit aged 65 and over.

Life expectancy

While life expectancy has been improving, a gap between the life expectancy of Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women persists. In 2001, the estimated life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal females was 76.8 years, over five years less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts who could expect to live, on average, just over 82 years (Chart 3).[13]

Chart 3
Life expectancy at birth, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Demography Division, 2001.

13. O'Donnell, V. 2005. 'Aboriginal Women in Canada.' *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report.* (Component of Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-503-X).

In 2001, Métis women had a life expectancy of 77.7 years, while the figure for First Nations women was 76.7 years. Inuit women had a shorter life expectancy of 71.7 years. In all three Aboriginal groups, though, women had longer life expectancies than men.

In 2001, Aboriginal females had a life expectancy at birth of 76.8 years, compared with 70.9 years for Aboriginal males.[14]

Other recently-released research had similar findings. It concluded that this gap has widened in recent decades.[15] In 1991, life expectancy at birth for women in the Inuit-inhabited areas was about 69.6 years, which was about 11 years lower than for Canadian women overall (80.9 years). In 2001, life expectancy for women in Inuit-inhabited areas did not increase (69.8 years), although it rose by about 1 year for Canadian women as a whole (82.0).

A different study found that at age 25, a Métis woman could expect to live an additional 53.7 years, about 4.2 years longer than Métis men and 5.5 years less than non-Aboriginal women.[16] Life expectancy at age 25 was estimated to be about 52.9 additional years for Status Indian women, about 6 years shorter than non-Aboriginal women.

This study also examined whether socioeconomic indicators, such as income, education and occupation could explain the excess mortality for Métis and Status Indians. It found that differences in socioeconomic indicators could explain roughly two-thirds of the excess mortality for Métis and Status Indian men, and nearly 30% for Métis and Status Indian women.

14. *ibid.*
15. Wilkins, R., S. Uppal, P. Finès, S. Senécal, É. Guimond and R. Dion. March 2008. 'Life expectancy in the Inuit-inhabited areas of Canada, 1989 to 2003.' *Health Reports* Volume 19, no. 1. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 82-003-X), p. 7-20.
16. Tjepkema, M., R. Wilkins, S. Senécal, É. Guimond, and C. Penney. 'December 2009. Mortality of Métis and Registered Indian adults in Canada: An 11-year follow-up study.' *Health Reports* Volume 20, no. 4. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 82-003-X).

Aboriginal women and their families

A large proportion of Aboriginal women in Canada live with either their immediate or extended family. In 2006, 86% of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over lived with family members, compared with 83% of non-Aboriginal women (Table 7).

Table 7
Family status of women aged 15 and over, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006

Census family status	Total Aboriginal population	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Total non-Aboriginal population
			percentage		
Total — Living with family	**86.3**	**87.3**	**84.5**	**92.4**	**82.5**
With husband or wife	30.3	27.2	35.4	28.4	47.1
With common-law partner	17.5	18.8	15.0	22.1	10.2
Lone parent	18.0	20.3	14.2	17.4	8.3
Child living with parents	16.8	16.6	17.1	20.5	14.2
Living with extended family members	3.8	4.4	2.8	4.0	2.7
Total — Not living with family	**13.7**	**12.7**	**15.5**	**7.6**	**17.5**
Living alone	9.7	9.1	10.9	5.2	14.2
Living with non-relatives	4.0	3.7	4.7	2.4	3.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
			number		
Total population	**428,950**	**249,215**	**148,025**	**16,745**	**12,687,795**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Among Aboriginal women, Inuit are the most likely to live with family members. In 2006, 92% of Inuit women lived with either their immediate or extended families, while the figures were 87% for First Nations women and 84% for Métis women.

Aboriginal women were less likely than non-Aboriginal women to be legally married. In 2006, 30% of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over, versus 47% of non-Aboriginal women, lived with a spouse. In contrast, a larger proportion of Aboriginal women were living in a common-law relationship compared to non-Aboriginal women, 17% versus 10%. Common-law status refers to persons who live together as a couple but who are not legally married to each other.

Married and common-law couples include those of the opposite sex or of the same sex. The 2006 Census enumerated about 1,350 Aboriginal women in same-sex couples; about 15% of Aboriginal women in same-sex couples were married, while the remainder were living in a common-law relationship.

Relatively few Aboriginal women were living alone. In 2006, just 10% of Aboriginal women lived alone, compared with 14% of non-Aboriginal women. Among Aboriginal women, Métis women were the most likely to live alone. That year, 11% of Métis women, versus 9% of First Nations women and 5% of Inuit women, lived by themselves. It should be noted that nearly half of non-Aboriginal women who lived alone were 65 years and over, compared to 23% of Aboriginal women (Table 7).

Lone parents

Aboriginal women were more likely to be lone parents than non-Aboriginal women. In 2006, 18% of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over were heading families on their own, compared with 8% of non-Aboriginal women (Table 7).

In 2006, 20% of First Nations women over the age of 15 were lone parents, while this was the case for 17% of Inuit women and 14% of Métis women.

Lone-parent families headed by Aboriginal women tend to be larger than those headed by their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In 2006, 22% of Aboriginal female lone parents had three or more children, more than twice the figure for their non-Aboriginal counterparts at 10%. About one in four First Nations (25%) and Inuit (23%) female lone parents had three or more children, while 16% of Métis female lone parents had three or more children.

Fertility rates

Fertility rates remain higher for Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women. In the 1996 to 2001 period, the fertility rate of Aboriginal women was 2.6 children, that is, they could expect to have that many children, on average, over the course of their lifetime; this compared with a figure of 1.5 among all Canadian women.[17] In the same period, the fertility rate for Inuit women was estimated to be 3.4 children, compared with rates of 2.9 children for First Nations women and 2.2 for Métis women.[18]

Teen parents

Census data reveal that in 2006, 8% of Aboriginal teenage girls (15 to 19 years old) were parents, compared to 1.3% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Almost one in ten (9%) of First Nations and Inuit teenage girls were parents; this proportion was higher for First Nations teenage girls living on reserve (12%). About 4% of Métis teenage girls were parents in 2006.

A recent study has found that the fertility rate of Status Indian teenagers aged 15 to 19, from 1986 to 2004, is six times higher than that of other Canadian teens.[19] In Manitoba, the fertility rate during the 2000 to 2004 period for teenage Status Indian women was 125 births per 1,000 women, the highest of all the provinces.[20] As for the consequences of being a teen parent, the study notes that, 'generally speaking, early motherhood increases the vulnerability of a young First Nations woman who is already disadvantaged socio-economically by reason of her cultural background and gender.'[21]

17. O'Donnell, V. 2005. 'Aboriginal Women in Canada.' *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report.* (Component of Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-503-X).
18. Statistics Canada. June 2005. *Projections of the Aboriginal populations, Canada, provinces and territories: 2001 to 2017.* (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 91-547-XIE).
19. Big Eagle, C. and É. Guimond. 2009. 'Contributions that Count: First Nations Women and Demography.' *Restoring Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture.* G. Guthrie Valaskakis, M. Dion Stout, and É. Guimond (eds.).
20. *ibid.*
21. Guimond, É. and N. Robitaille. March 2008. 'When Teenage Girls Have Children: Trends and Consequences'. *Horizons Policy Research Initiative.* Volume 10, no. 1.

Recent research findings about Aboriginal girls and teens

Many young Aboriginal children growing up in large families with young parents

According to the 2006 Census, there were approximately 7,000 Inuit, 35,000 Métis and 86,000 First Nations children under the age of 6 years across Canada. Roughly half (49%) of these children were girls.

Compared to non-Aboriginal children, higher percentages of these young Aboriginal children are growing up in large families. Of those under the age of 6, 28% of Inuit girls, 25% of First Nations girls, and 11% of Métis girls were living in families with four or more children. This is compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal girls under the age of 6 in Canada.

About one in four Inuit (24%) and First Nations (26%) girls, and one in five (21%) Métis girls had mothers between the ages of 15 to 24; this is compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal girls.

Many persons involved in raising young Aboriginal children

While many young Aboriginal children are being raised by lone parents (36% versus 13% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts), the Aboriginal Children's Survey found that other people, including extended family and community members, are involved in raising them.

In 2006, among children under the age of 6 years, 67% of First Nations children living off reserve, 69% of Métis children, and 71% of Inuit children received focused attention from their grandparents at least once a week. Furthermore, 26% of First Nations children, 24% of Métis children, and 35% of Inuit children received focused attention from Elders at least once a week.[22]

Guèvremont (2010) reported that while Inuit and Métis children living with two parents were more likely to have four or more people raising them, this was not the case for First Nations children living off-reserve.[23] The percentage of off-reserve First Nations children with four or more people raising them was not different for children living with a lone parent compared to children living with two parents.

22. O'Donnell, V. November 2008. 'Selected findings of the Aboriginal Children's Survey 2006: Family and Community', *Canadian Social Trends*, no. 86 (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 11-008-XWE).
23. Guèvremont, A. June 2010. The Early Learning Experiences of Inuit, Métis and Off-reserve First Nations Children in Canada. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-644-XWE).

Crowded housing

Household crowding has been linked to a number of health and social issues, including increased rates of respiratory infections, mental health problems and family violence.[24] Crowded dwellings are defined as having more than 1 person per room. Not counted as rooms are bathrooms, halls, vestibules and rooms used solely for business purposes.

In 2006, 31% of Inuit women and girls were living in crowded homes, compared to 3% of non-Aboriginal females. The percentage of Inuit females living in crowded homes had declined from 36% in 1996.

Crowding was of particular concern in Inuit Nunangat, where 39% of Inuit women and girls were living in crowded conditions. In the Inuit region of Nunavik in northern Quebec, half of Inuit females were living in crowded conditions, as were 39% in Nunavut, 19% in the Inuvialuit region in Northwest Territories and 11% in Nunatsiavut in Labrador (Table 8).

Table 8
Proportion of Inuit females living in crowded dwellings and in homes requiring major repairs, by Inuit region, Canada, 2006

Inuit females	In crowded dwellings		In homes requiring major repairs	
	number	%	number	%
Total Inuit females	**7,790**	**30.7**	**6,995**	**27.6**
Inuit Nunangat (Inuit regions)	**7,530**	**38.6**	**6,155**	**31.5**
Nunatsiavut	120	11.4	355	33.8
Nunavik	2,355	49.8	2,195	46.5
Nunavut	4,750	39.0	3,165	26.0
Inuvialuit region	300	19.4	440	28.4
Outside of Inuit Nunangat	**265**	**4.5**	**840**	**14.3**

Notes: Crowded dwellings are defined as having more than 1 person per room. Not counted as rooms are bathrooms, halls, vestibules and rooms used solely for business purposes. The two categories 'In crowded dwellings' and 'In homes requiring major repairs' were calculated independently of each other. No figures are cited in this table for both crowding and need for major repairs.
Homes in need of major repairs refers to whether, in the judgement of the respondent, the dwelling requires major repairs. Major repairs refer to the repair of defective plumbing or electrical wiring, structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings, etc. (excluding desirable remodelling or additions).
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

While sufficient housing is important in every part of Canada, research indicates that Inuit, in particular, face a number of housing challenges. "As most communities have no homeless shelters and as extreme winter temperatures make living outside dangerous, some Inuit are taken into the homes of family and friends that may already be crowded."[25]

24. Health Canada. 1999. *A Second Diagnostic on the Health of First Nations and Inuit People in Canada*. Health Canada, Ottawa: 14.
25. Tait, H. December 2008. *Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006: Inuit Health and Social Conditions*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-637-X – No. 001).

In 2006, 14% of First Nations women and girls were living in crowded dwellings, over three times higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal females (3%). In reserve communities, 26% of First Nations women and girls were living in crowded conditions; among First Nations females living off reserve, 6% were living in crowded conditions. Overall, the proportion of First Nations females living in crowded conditions declined approximately 5 percentage points since 1996.[26]

Overall, about the same percentage of Métis women and girls were living in crowded conditions as non-Aboriginal women and girls (3%).

Half of Nunavut homes overcrowded

The 2009/2010 Nunavut Housing Needs Survey found that 49% of occupied dwellings in Nunavut were crowded[27] and/or in need of major repairs. In crowded dwellings, the median household size was six. About half (53%) of respondents in crowded dwellings reported that the living room was used for sleeping. The survey also found that about 1,220 residents of Nunavut (about 4% of the population) did not have a usual home and were living temporarily in another person's dwelling.[28]

Housing adequacy

One way to measure housing adequacy is to ask respondents if their dwelling requires major repairs (for example the repair of defective plumbing or electrical wiring, structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings).

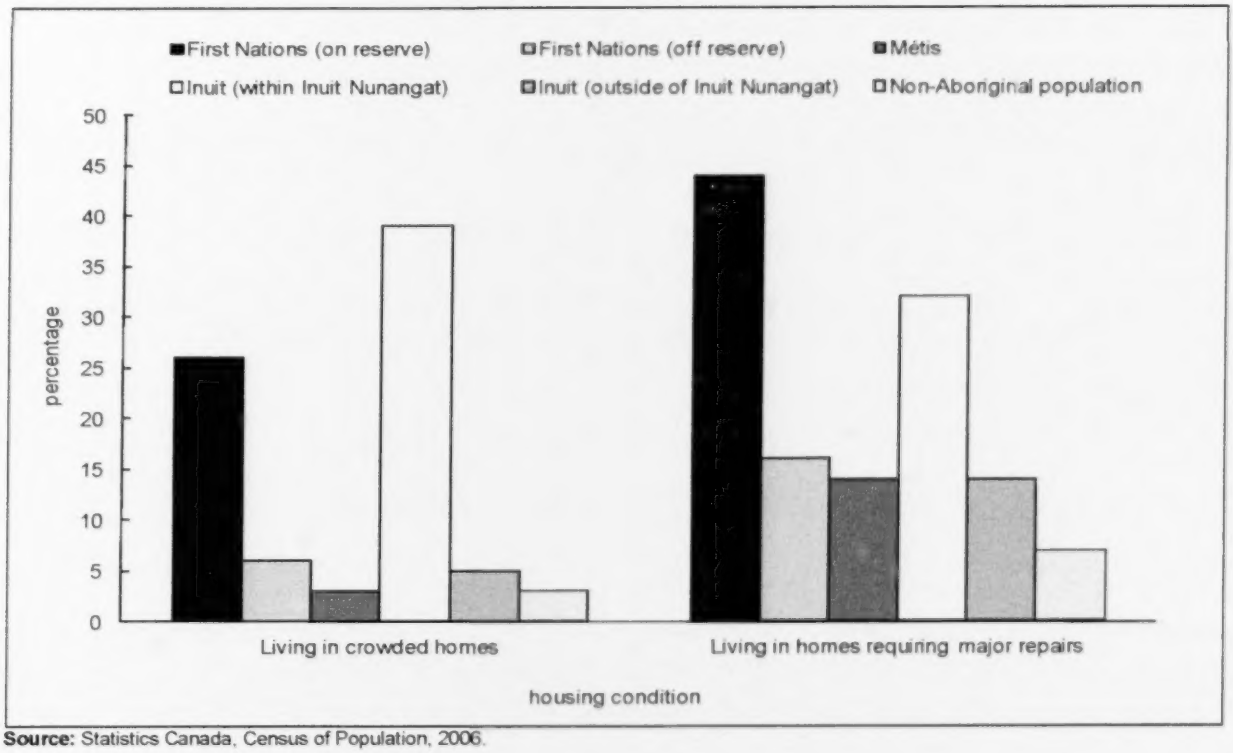
In 2006, 28% of Inuit women and girls were living in homes requiring major repairs; the proportion was higher in Inuit Nunangat (32%). This is compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal women and girls in Canada overall (Table 8).

In 2006, 28% of First Nations women and girls were living in dwellings that were in need of major repairs, compared with 7% of non-Aboriginal women and girls. Among First Nations females living off reserve, 16% were living in dwellings in need of major repairs. The need for major repairs is most pronounced in reserve communities where 44% of women and girls were living in homes that needed major repairs.

In 2006, 14% of Métis women and girls were living in dwellings that required major repairs, twice the percentage of non-Aboriginal females (7%) (Chart 4).

26. When comparisons are made to 1996, 2006 data have been adjusted to account for the addition of some Indian reserves and settlements that were incompletely enumerated in 1996. That is, only those Indian reserves that were enumerated in both census years (2006 and 1996) were included.
27. The Nunavut Housing Needs Survey used the National Occupation Standard (NOS) to determine levels of crowding; the NOS determines the number of bedrooms needed, taking into consideration the relationships of persons in the household, and compares bedrooms needed to the actual number of bedrooms in a dwelling.
28. Statistics Canada. October 2010. 'An analysis of the housing needs in Nunavut: Nunavut Housing Needs Survey 2009/2010'. A working paper prepared by Income Statistics Division, Statistics Canada for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Chart 4
Housing conditions of women and girls, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Aboriginal languages

English or French is the mother tongue—the language first learned at home in childhood and still understood—for the majority of Aboriginal females. In 2006, 73% of all Aboriginal females and girls reported that English was their mother tongue, while another 8% said French was their mother tongue. At the same time, though, the mother tongue of 19% of the female Aboriginal population was an Aboriginal language.

There were significant differences in the percentages of those with an Aboriginal mother tongue when looking at specific groups. In 2006, 65% of Inuit women and girls reported an Aboriginal mother tongue, compared to 25% of First Nations females and 3% of Métis females.

The proportion of Aboriginal women and girls who are able to speak an Aboriginal language is somewhat larger than the share whose mother tongue is an Aboriginal language. In 2006, 22% of Aboriginal females said they could converse in an Aboriginal language, whereas 19% reported one of these languages as their mother tongue (the language they first learned in childhood and still understand). This indicates that some Aboriginal women and girls may be learning Aboriginal languages as a second language.

This trend is also evident in each of the Aboriginal groups. While 25% of First Nations women and girls reported having an Aboriginal mother tongue, 29% reported knowledge of, or the ability to converse in, an Aboriginal language. For Inuit, these figures were 65% and 70%. For Métis, they were 3% and 4%.

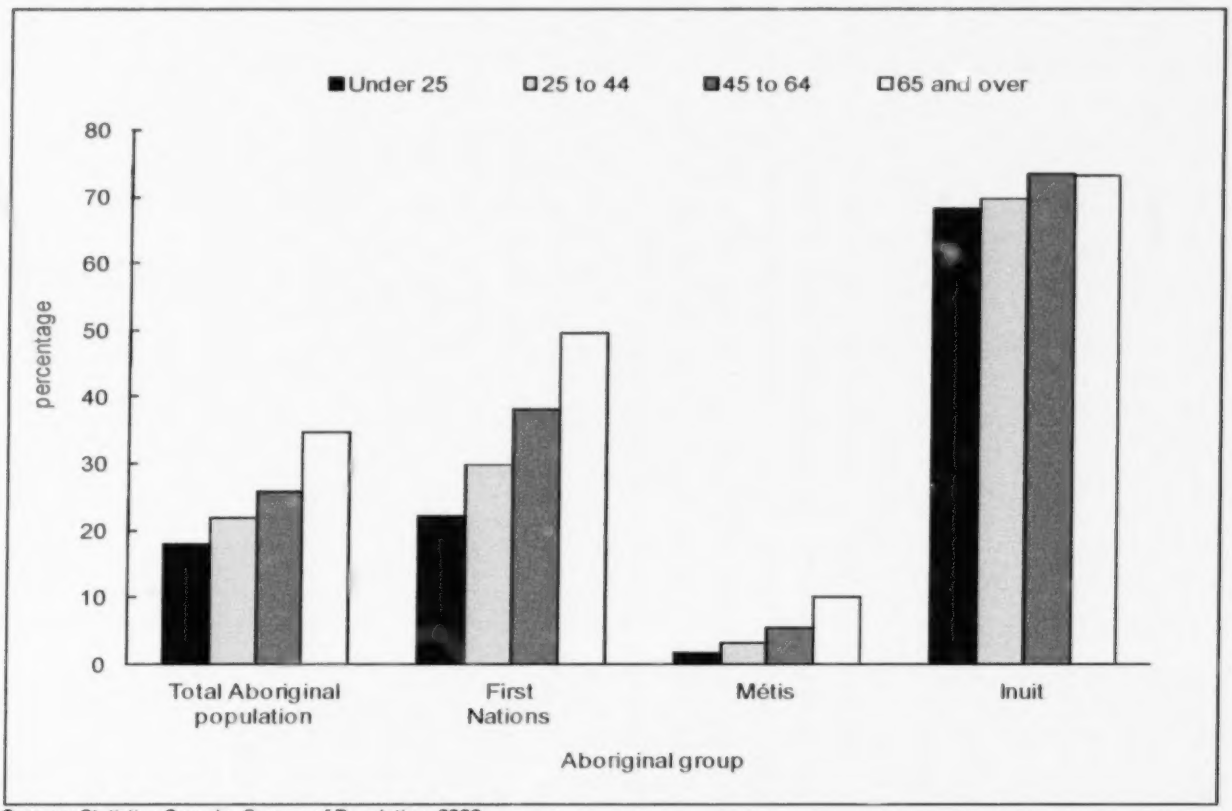
Findings from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey indicated that Aboriginal languages are important to Aboriginal women. In fact, 59% of Aboriginal women 15 years and over reported that learning, relearning or maintaining their Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important. Among Inuit women, 86% reported that keeping, learning or re-learning an Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important, as did 67% of First Nations women living off reserve, and 50% of Métis women.

Older women more likely to speak an Aboriginal language

Older women were more likely than their younger counterparts to be able to speak an Aboriginal language. In 2006, 35% of Aboriginal women aged 65 and over reported they could speak an Aboriginal language, compared to 18% of those under the age of 25 years.

This pattern was also observed when looking at each Aboriginal group separately; half (50%) of First Nations women 65 years and over could speak an Aboriginal language compared to 22% of those under the age of 25. One in ten (10%) senior Métis women could speak an Aboriginal language compared to 2% of those under the age of 25. The difference was less striking for Inuit—while 74% of Inuit women 65 years and over could speak an Aboriginal language, 68% of those under the age of 25 years reported knowledge of an Aboriginal language (Chart 5).

Chart 5
Aboriginal women and girls by knowledge of Aboriginal language, by group and age, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Higher proportions speak Aboriginal languages on reserve and in the North

There are also differences in the ability to speak an Aboriginal language depending on where women live. In 2006, approximately half (51%) of First Nations women living on reserve reported that they were able to speak an Aboriginal language, as compared to 12% of First Nations women living off reserve.

For Inuit women, 84% had knowledge of the Inuit language[29] in Inuit Nunangat, compared to 18% of those living outside of Inuit Nunangat. In Nunavik, 99% could speak the Inuit language, compared to 91% in Nunavut, 28% in Nunatsiavut and 22% in the Inuvialuit region.

Among Métis women, 4% had knowledge of an Aboriginal language. This proportion was slightly higher for those living in rural areas with 6%.

Factors in Aboriginal language retention

A recent study of young First Nations children living off reserve (those under 6 years old) revealed that the strongest predictor that a child will be able to speak an Aboriginal language is daily exposure to Aboriginal languages at home, holding all other characteristics constant.[30] The odds of understanding an Aboriginal language for young off-reserve First Nations children who were exposed to an Aboriginal language on a daily basis at home were 6.6 times the odds for children who were not.

This research finding was consistent with previous work, which found that the decline in Aboriginal mother tongue transmission from parents to children is informed first and foremost by home use.[31] 'The ever-diminishing use of Aboriginal languages as 'major home languages' reduces the chances of younger people acquiring their traditional language as a mother tongue.'[32]

The previous research also found that the Aboriginal mother tongue transmission from parents to children was linked to the life cycle; most notably for women. Using a cohort analysis of census data, the study showed that 'the most pronounced decline in home use of Aboriginal languages occurred among female youth from the ages of 20 to 24 in 1981 to ages 35 to 39 in 1996.'[33] The study notes that this is significant given that it is this period (from age 20 to 39 years) in the life cycle when women tend to leave the home, enter the labour force, marry, and bring up young children.

Paid work

Aboriginal women are generally less likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to be part of the paid work force. According to the 2006 Census, 51.1% of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over were employed, compared with 57.7% of non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women were also less likely than their male counterparts, 51.1% versus 56.5%, to be employed (Table 9).

29. There are five main Inuit language dialects spoken throughout Canada: Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun, and three different dialects of Inuktitut. In this article, these dialects are collectively known as the Inuit language.
30. Bougie, E. September 2010. 'Family, community, and Aboriginal language among young First Nations children living off reserve in Canada.' *Canadian Social Trends*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 11-008-X).
31. Norris, M. March 2008. 'Voices of Aboriginal Youth Today: Keeping Aboriginal Languages Alive for Future Generations.' *Horizons Policy Research Initiative*. Volume 10, no. 1. p. 60-67.
32. *ibid*. p. 60.
33. *ibid*. p. 61.

Table 9
Labour force indicators and median income, population aged 15 years and over, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006

Labour force indicator and median income	Total Aboriginal population	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Status Indians	Non-Aboriginal population
			percentage			
Participation rate —						
Total population	**63.0**	**58.8**	**70.1**	**61.3**	**57.8**	**66.9**
Females	59.1	55.0	66.2	58.9	53.9	61.7
Males	67.3	63.2	74.1	63.9	62.2	72.5
Employment rate —						
Total population	**53.7**	**48.2**	**63.1**	**48.9**	**46.8**	**62.7**
Females	51.1	46.1	60.0	49.1	44.8	57.7
Males	56.5	50.7	66.3	48.6	49.2	68.0
Unemployment rate —						
Total population	**14.8**	**18.0**	**10.0**	**20.3**	**19.0**	**6.3**
Females	13.5	16.2	9.5	16.7	17.0	6.4
Males	16.1	19.8	10.5	23.8	21.0	6.2
Median income —			dollars			
Total population	**16,752**	**14,477**	**20,935**	**16,969**	**14,095**	**25,955**
Females	15,654	14,490	17,520	16,599	14,337	20,640
Males	18,714	14,458	26,464	17,425	13,802	32,639

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

In 2006, 60.0% of Métis women were employed, slightly higher than the figure for the non-Aboriginal female population. About half (49.1%) of Inuit women, and 46.1% of First Nations women, were employed (Table 9).

As with the overall population, Aboriginal women aged 25 to 54 are more likely to be employed than both their younger and older counterparts. In 2006, 62.4% of Aboriginal women between 25 and 54 years were employed, as compared to 40.0% of women aged 15 to 24 years and 28.5% of women 55 years and over. This same pattern can be observed among Métis, Inuit and First Nations women (data not shown).

In each age group, Aboriginal women were less likely to be employed than non-Aboriginal women. The gap between the employment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women was particularly wide in the 15 to 24 age group in which 40.0% of Aboriginal women, versus 58.4% of non-Aboriginal women, were employed (data not shown).

Among those in the core working age group (25 to 54 years) in each of the three Aboriginal groups, women were less likely to be employed than men. In 2006, 61.5% of First Nations women living off-reserve were employed compared to 72.4% of their male counterparts. Similarly, 70.4% of Métis women were employed compared to 79.2% of Métis men. However, the gap in employment rates between men and women among First Nations people living on reserve and Inuit were less pronounced; 61.0% of Inuit women were employed, compared to 61.2% of Inuit men. Among First Nations people living on reserve, the employment rates of women (51.6%) and men (51.9%) were similar (data not shown).

Sales and service most common occupation

Generally speaking, Canadian women in the labour force continue to be concentrated in occupations traditionally held by women.[34] In 2006, 37% of all Aboriginal women employed between January 1, 2005 and May 16, 2006 reported working in sales or service, and 23% reported administrative jobs. Aboriginal women were more than twice as likely to report working in these occupations as Aboriginal men, only 27% of whom reported employment in these sectors. The proportion of Aboriginal women who worked in these sectors (60%) was slightly higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal women (56%). The high proportion of women reporting employment in sales and service or administrative occupations was observed across all Aboriginal groups (58% of First Nations women, 61% of Métis women and 60% of Inuit women) (Table 10).

Higher proportions of First Nations women living on reserve and Inuit women reported employment in 'social science, education, government service and religious occupations' compared to non-Aboriginal women. In 2006, 21% of Inuit women and 24% of First Nations women living on reserve reported employment in these occupations, compared to 12% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Aboriginal women were also about as likely as both their non-Aboriginal counterparts and Aboriginal men to be employed in management occupations. In 2006, 6% of Aboriginal women reported having managerial positions, whereas the figure was 7% for Aboriginal men and 8% for non-Aboriginal women. The proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women reporting management occupations was the same for each group (6%).

34. Ferrao, V. December 2010. 'Paid Work.' *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report.* (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-503-X).

Table 10
Occupational distribution of experienced labour force aged 15 years and over, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006

Occupation	Total Aboriginal population	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-Aboriginal population
	percentage				
All occupations — Total population	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Management	6.4	6.4	6.5	6.3	9.8
Business, finance and administrative	14.5	13.7	15.4	15.0	18.0
Natural and applied sciences	3.3	2.9	3.9	3.0	6.7
Health	4.0	3.5	4.8	2.1	5.7
Social science, education, government service and religion	9.6	11.2	7.3	13.1	8.4
Art, culture, recreation and sport	2.2	2.3	1.9	4.9	3.0
Sales and service	28.5	28.9	27.8	31.7	23.8
Trades, transport and equipment operators	20.1	19.3	21.3	19.1	15.0
Occupations unique to primary industry	6.1	6.6	5.8	2.9	3.8
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	5.2	5.2	5.3	1.9	5.9
All occupations — Females	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Management	6.0	6.1	5.9	5.6	7.6
Business, finance and administrative	23.0	21.7	24.6	23.4	27.2
Natural and applied sciences	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.4	3.1
Health	7.0	6.1	8.5	3.5	9.6
Social science, education, government service and religion	14.7	16.9	11.3	20.7	12.0
Art, culture, recreation and sport	2.4	2.3	2.2	5.2	3.5
Sales and service	36.5	36.3	36.8	36.5	28.9
Trades, transport and equipment operators	3.6	3.7	3.6	2.1	2.2
Occupations unique to primary industry	2.0	2.1	2.1	0.4	1.8
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	3.1	3.2	3.0	1.4	4.2
All occupations — Males	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Management	6.8	6.6	7.0	7.0	11.8
Business, finance and administrative	6.3	5.9	6.7	6.8	9.8
Natural and applied sciences	4.8	4.1	5.6	4.6	9.9
Health	1.2	1.0	1.4	0.8	2.2
Social science, education, government service and religion	4.8	5.6	3.7	5.7	5.1
Art, culture, recreation and sport	2.1	2.2	1.6	4.6	2.6
Sales and service	20.9	21.7	19.5	27.2	19.3
Trades, transport and equipment operators	36.0	34.5	37.7	35.7	26.5
Occupations unique to primary industry	10.0	11.1	9.2	5.4	5.5
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	7.2	7.3	7.5	2.5	7.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

High unemployment rates

Unemployment rates for Aboriginal women were twice as high as those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In 2006, 13.5% of Aboriginal women were unemployed, compared with a rate of 6.4% for non-Aboriginal women. The unemployment rate among Aboriginal women, though, was lower than that experienced by Aboriginal men, 16.1% of whom were unemployed that year (to be considered unemployed, a person must be without paid work or self-employment work and be available for work or looking for work or be on a temporary lay-off or have arrangements to start a new job within four weeks).

As with the overall population, unemployment rates among Aboriginal women were highest for young adults. In 2006, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal women aged 15 to 24 was 20.1%, compared with 12.1% of those aged 25 to 54. This pattern held for the three Aboriginal groups. Comparing young women (15 to 24 years) to those aged 25 to 54, the unemployment rates for Inuit were 23.1% and 15.1% respectively; for First Nations women 25.4% and 14.5%; and for Métis women 13.9% and 8.2%.

Unemployment rates differed depending on where Aboriginal women lived. Among First Nations women, those living on reserve experienced the highest unemployment rate (20.6%), while the unemployment rate for First Nations women not living on reserve was 13.8%. Inuit women living in Inuit Nunangat had an unemployment rate of 17.5%, compared to 14.1% for those living outside of Inuit Nunangat. For all Métis women, the unemployment rate was 9.5% in 2006; in rural areas it was 10.4%.

Sharper decrease in employment for Aboriginal people during labour market downturn

Research has shown that prior to the economic downturn that started in 2008, Aboriginal people had lower employment rates when compared to the non-Aboriginal population.[35] When the labour market downturn began between 2008 and 2009, Labour Force Survey (LFS) data revealed that Aboriginal people experienced sharper declines in employment rates than non-Aboriginal people.[36]

According to the LFS, between 2008 and 2009, employment rates fell by 3.2 percentage points among Aboriginal people and 1.9 percentage points among non-Aboriginal people. As a result, the already existing gap between the groups widened.

At the same time, the unemployment rate rose more sharply for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal people. In 2009, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people reached 13.9%, up from 10.4% in 2008. In comparison, 8.1% of non-Aboriginal people were unemployed in 2009, up from 6.0% the previous year.

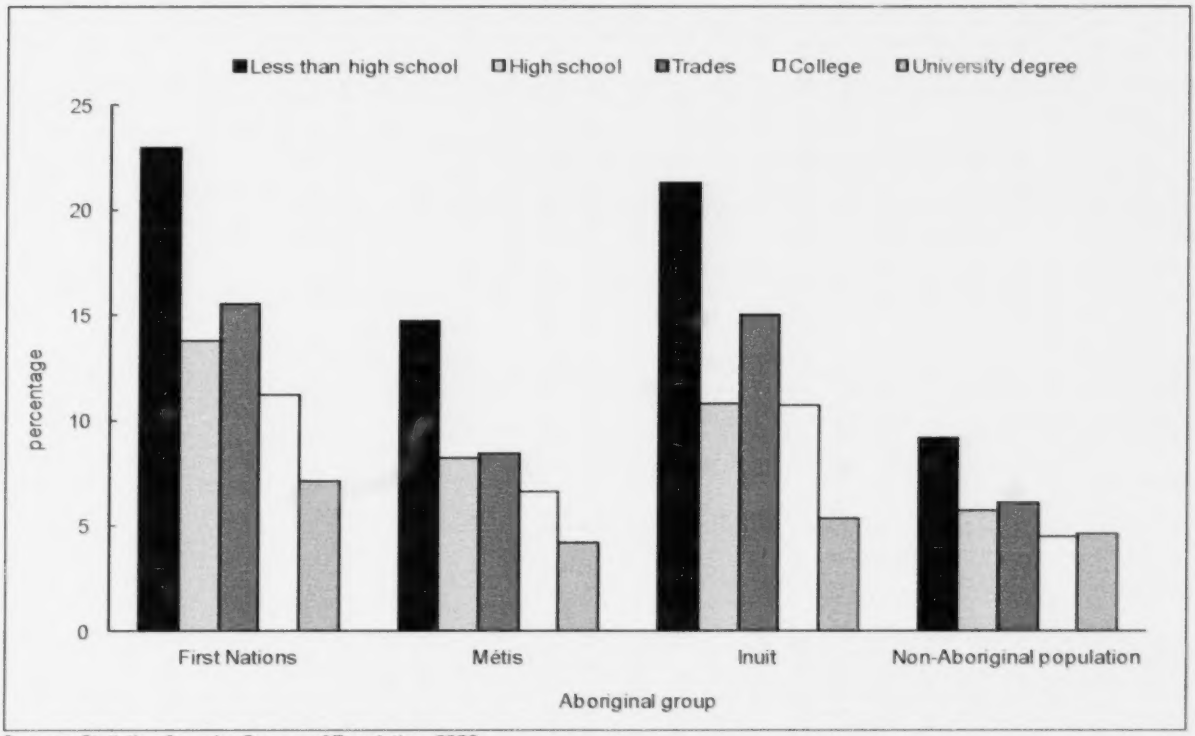
Unemployment rates decrease with higher levels of education

Generally speaking, the gap between the unemployment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is smaller among those with higher levels of education. In 2006, for those women aged 25 to 54 without high school completion, the unemployment rate was 20.5% for Aboriginal women and 9.2% for non-Aboriginal women, a gap of 11.3 percentage points. For those with university degrees, the unemployment rate was 5.8% for Aboriginal women and 4.6% for non-Aboriginal women, a gap of 1.2 percentage points.

Unemployment rates for Aboriginal women remain higher than non-Aboriginal women regardless of education level, with the exceptions of Métis and Inuit women with university degrees. In 2006, the unemployment rates of Métis and Inuit women with university degrees were about the same as that for non-Aboriginal women. Métis women with university degrees had an unemployment rate of 4.2%, compared to 4.6% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Chart 6). The unemployment rate for Inuit women was slightly higher at 5.4%. It is important to note that the proportion of women with university degrees is quite different among these groups (11% of Métis women and 5% of Inuit women compared to 26% of non-Aboriginal women).

35. Zietsma, D. May 2010. 'Aboriginal People Living Off-reserve and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2009'. *The Aboriginal Labour Force Analysis Series* (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 71-588-X, no. 2).
36. The LFS includes Aboriginal people living in the provinces and excludes those who live in reserve communities.

Chart 6
Unemployment rates by highest level of schooling, women aged 25 to 54, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Some research has found that those with higher levels of education were less affected by the recent economic downturn than those with lower levels of education.[37] According to the Labour Force Survey between 2008 and 2009, Aboriginal people with less than a high school diploma as well as those with some postsecondary education[38] had larger increases in their unemployment rates than Aboriginal people who had completed postsecondary education.

Inuit harvesting activities

When looking at labour force statistics, it is important to keep in mind that these data do not always reflect the complex work situation of Aboriginal people, especially those living in rural or remote communities. Official unemployment rates, for example, may not always reflect work that is carried out for which no payment is received. Work of this type is common in many Aboriginal communities where large amounts of time are spent fishing, trapping, hunting, sewing, and caring for children of friends and family members. Also, there is much seasonal work in many Aboriginal communities.

37. Zietsma, D. May 2010. 'Aboriginal People Living Off-reserve and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2009'. *The Aboriginal Labour Force Analysis Series* (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 71-588-X, no. 2).
38. Includes those who only graduated high school.

According to the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), the majority of Inuit women aged 15 years and over (62%) in Inuit Nunangat reported harvesting country foods such as seals, whale, caribou, fish and berries. Within Inuit Nunangat, 65% of Inuit lived in homes where at least half of the meat and fish consumed was country food, and 59% of Inuit children ate wild meat at least 3 days per week. A strong tradition of food sharing is reflected in the APS data. The majority of Inuit adults in each of the four Inuit regions reported living in homes where country food was shared with people in other households.[39]

For more information about different types of unpaid work, please see the forthcoming chapter 'Families and unpaid work'.

Income

The incomes of Aboriginal women aged 15 years and over in Canada tend to be relatively low. In 2005, the median income[40] of Aboriginal women was $15,654, about $5,000 less than the figure for non-Aboriginal women, who had a median income of $20,640 that year. The median income of Aboriginal women was also about $3,000 less than that of Aboriginal men, for whom the figure was $18,714 (Table 9).

First Nations women had a median income at $14,490. For Inuit women, the median income was $16,599 and for Métis women, $17,520 (Table 9). The income of Aboriginal women varies depending on their area of residence. For First Nations women, those living on reserve had a median income of $12,466 while the median income for all First Nations women living off reserve was $16,149. For Métis women living in rural areas, the median income was $16,144. Median income for Inuit women living in Inuit Nunangat ($17,141) was higher than for Inuit women living outside of Inuit Nunangat ($15,383). It is important to note that the cost of living in Inuit Nunangat is relatively high compared to southern Canada.[41,42] For example, in December 2004, a 5 lb bag of potatoes could be purchased for $2.49 in Ottawa, Ontario. The cost for the same item in Clyde River, Nunavut was $7.49.[43]

Income gap

Recent research measuring the income gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada found that at the Master's or Bachelor's degree levels, Aboriginal people had essentially the same median incomes as non-Aboriginal people in 2006. 'Perhaps most startling, Aboriginal women who have obtained at least a Bachelor's degree actually have higher median incomes than non-Aboriginal Canadian women with equivalent education. This is the only segment of Aboriginal society that exceeds the median incomes of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.' The study also found that below the Bachelor's degree level, Aboriginal people consistently made far less than non-Aboriginal people with the same education level.[44]

39. Statistics Canada. December 2008. *Fact Sheet: Inuit Health, Education and Country Food Harvesting*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-637-X 2008004).
40. Median income is calculated from the unrounded number of individuals with income in that group. This concept and procedure applies to total income, employment income, wages and salaries, and any other component of income. The median income marks the midpoint; in other words, it is the point where the incomes of half of individuals fall below the median, and half are above the median.
41. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2008. '*Revised Northern Food Basket*'. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nth/fon/fc/pubs/ntb/ntb-eng.asp (accessed May 16, 2011)
42. Bernard, N. 2006. '*Nunavik Comparative Price Index 2006*'. http://www.chaireconditionautochtone.fss.ulaval.ca/documents/pdf/135.pdf (accessed May 26, 2011)
43. Statistics Canada. March 2006. *Harvesting and community well-being among Inuit in the Canadian Arctic: Preliminary findings from the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic 2001*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-619-XIE) P.9.
44. Wilson, D. and D. Macdonald. April 2010. *The Income Gap Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Sources of income

The largest share of income of Aboriginal women aged 15 years and over comes from employment sources. In 2005, 70% of all the income of Aboriginal women came from employment income.

One-quarter of Aboriginal women's income came from government transfer payments, such as child benefits and old age security pensions and guaranteed income supplements. In 2005, 9% of all income of Aboriginal women came from child benefits. This figure was 12% for First Nations women, 11% for Inuit women, 5% for Métis women, and 3% for non-Aboriginal women. Child benefits refer to payments received under the Canada Child Tax Benefit program during calendar year 2005 by parents with dependent children under 18 years of age.

Below the low income cut-off (LICO)

It should be noted that the calculations of the low income before tax cut-offs (LICO-BT)[45] do not include people living on Indian reserves, as well as those living in the territories. This means that Inuit who live in the territories (57% of all Inuit women) are missing from the figures for Inuit living below the LICO-BT. Also missing are First Nations people living on reserve (41% of the total female First Nations population).

Aboriginal women aged 15 years and over experienced relatively high rates of low income. In 2005, 30% of all Aboriginal females were classified as living in a household with incomes below Statistics Canada's LICO-BT. This was almost double the figure for non-Aboriginal women, 16% of whom had low incomes that year. The share of Aboriginal women with low incomes was also higher than that of Aboriginal men (26%).

In 2005, 37% First Nations females (off-reserve) were living below the LICO-BT, while the figures were 23% among Métis and Inuit females respectively.

45. The low income before tax cut-off (LICO-BT) is an income threshold, determined by analysing family expenditure data, below which families will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family would. It is not a measure of poverty.

Incomplete high school

In 2006, 35% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had not graduated from high school, whereas the figure was 20% among non-Aboriginal women and 39% among Aboriginal men (Table 11).

More than half of Inuit women aged 25 and over had less than high school (53%), compared to 39% of First Nations women and 27% of Métis women. The percentages of women without high school decreased from 2001 to 2006 for First Nations women (from 48% to 39%) and Métis women (from 40% to 27%). For Inuit, the percentage of women aged 25 and over without high school decreased from 57% in 2001 to 53% in 2006.[46]

When asked why they had not completed elementary or secondary school in the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, about one in five (23%) Aboriginal women aged 15 to 34 reported 'pregnancy or to take care of children.' About 17% reported 'boredom'. In contrast, about one quarter (26%) of young Aboriginal men cited 'wanted to work' as the reason for leaving school early and 17% said that they were 'bored' with school.

The Youth in Transition Survey found similar results; among 18- to 20- year olds in the total Canadian population 'dissatisfaction with school or other school-related problems' was cited more often as the primary reason for leaving. But some dropouts leave for other primary reasons; work for young men and pregnancy and child rearing for young women.'[47]

46. When comparisons are made to 2001, 2006 data have been adjusted to account for the addition of some Indian reserves and settlements that were incompletely enumerated in 2001. That is, only those Indian reserves that were enumerated in both census years (2006 and 2001) were included.
47. Bowlby, Jeffrey W. and K. McMullen. January 2002. *At a Crossroads: First Results for the 18 to 20-Year-Old Cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 81-591-XIE) p. 42.

Table 11
Highest level of educational attainment of women aged 15 years and over, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006

Level of education	Aboriginal	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-Aboriginal
	percentage				
15 years and over	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
No certificate, diploma or degree	41.2	45.6	32.3	60.0	22.8
High school certificate or equivalent	22.9	21.1	26.8	14.5	26.8
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	8.2	7.4	9.6	6.6	7.6
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	17.2	15.8	19.8	13.5	19.2
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	3.4	3.6	3.4	2.0	5.0
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above	7.1	6.6	8.1	3.5	18.5
15 to 24 years old	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
No certificate, diploma or degree	59.9	65.8	48.0	75.2	36.1
High school certificate or equivalent	27.4	24.4	34.1	16.7	36.7
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	2.8	2.4	3.4	2.5	3.5
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	6.7	5.2	9.3	4.6	12.8
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	1.0	0.9	1.3	0.2	2.4
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above	2.2	1.3	3.9	0.9	8.5
25 years and over	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
No certificate, diploma or degree	35.1	38.8	27.2	53.2	20.5
High school certificate or equivalent	21.4	19.9	24.5	13.4	25.0
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	10.0	9.1	11.5	8.4	8.4
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	20.6	19.3	23.2	17.5	20.4
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	4.2	4.4	4.1	2.8	5.5
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above	8.7	8.4	9.4	4.6	20.3
25 to 54 years old	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
No certificate, diploma or degree	29.6	33.6	21.0	48.6	11.4
High school certificate or equivalent	23.1	21.8	26.3	14.3	24.5
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	10.3	9.3	11.9	9.0	8.9
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	22.9	21.4	26.0	19.9	23.9
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	4.5	4.7	4.3	3.0	5.4
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above	9.5	9.1	10.6	5.1	25.9
55 years and over	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
No certificate, diploma or degree	54.2	57.1	49.0	73.4	35.6
High school certificate or equivalent	15.2	13.4	18.3	9.6	25.9
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	8.9	8.3	10.3	6.1	7.4
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	12.6	12.1	13.6	6.8	14.5
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	3.4	3.4	3.4	1.6	5.6
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above	5.7	5.7	5.5	2.4	10.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Youth aged 15- to 19-year-olds not in school: Comparing internationally

In 2006, 29% of Aboriginal teenagers aged 15 to 19 were no longer pursuing a formal education (29% of Aboriginal teen boys and 28% of Aboriginal teen girls). This was higher than the average of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (19%) in Canada. Compared with the youth populations of other countries (Indigenous and non-Indigenous combined), the percentage of Aboriginal 15- to 19-year olds not in education in Canada was almost double the average of 15% across the 31 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2008.[48,49]

Aboriginal women less likely to have a university degree

There is a gap between the proportions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women with university degrees. In 2006, 9% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had a university degree, compared with 20% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Table 11).

Aboriginal women were slightly more likely to have a university degree than Aboriginal men, 6% of whom had completed university. Indeed, women made up 63% of Aboriginal people aged 25 and over with a university degree in 2006. This gender difference was not observed in the non-Aboriginal population; in 2006, women made up 50% of those aged 25 and over with a university degree.

In 2006, among women aged 25 years and over, 9% of Métis women had a university degree, as did 8% of First Nations women and 5% of Inuit women (Table 11).

At the same time, Aboriginal women were as likely as other women to have a diploma or certificate from a community college. In 2006, 21% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over were community college graduates, while the figure was 20% among non-Aboriginal women in this age range. Aboriginal women were also more likely than Aboriginal men, 21% versus 14%, to have a community college certificate or diploma.

Almost one in four (23%) Métis women over the age of 25 had a diploma or certificate from a community college, compared to 19% of First Nations women and 18% of Inuit women (Table 11).

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents who had taken some education, but who were not currently pursuing postsecondary studies, about the reasons why they had not finished their studies. Of First Nations women living off reserve, Métis women and Inuit women who had started, but had not completed a postsecondary program, 15% reported 'financial reasons' as the reason they had not finished their postsecondary schooling, while 14% 'wanted to work'. About 11% reported that they had to 'care for their own child or pregnancy' as the reason for not completing their postsecondary schooling, and 13% reported 'other family responsibilities.' About 12% reported that they had 'lost interest'.

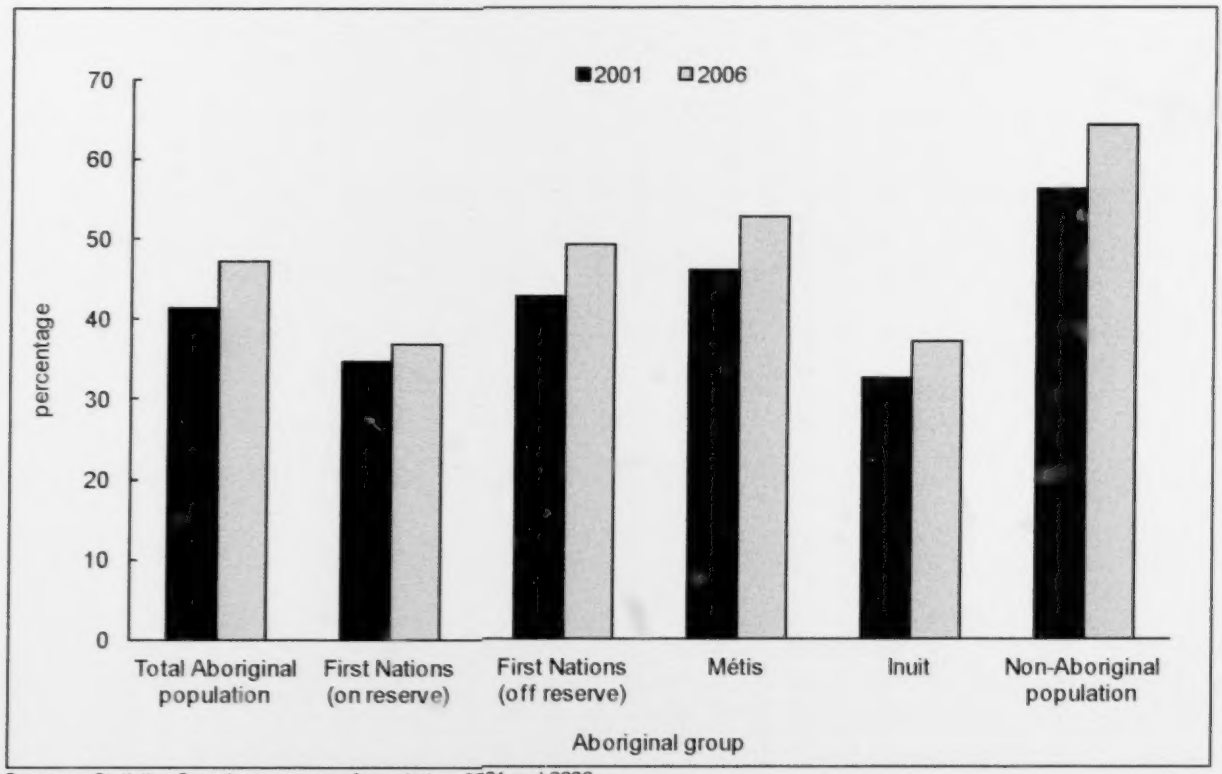
48. The Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
49. Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division. September 2010. *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective*. (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-604-X).

More Aboriginal women achieving postsecondary qualifications

Higher percentages of Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 54 reported completed postsecondary education between 2001 and 2006. In 2006, 47% of Aboriginal women between 25 and 54 had completed postsecondary school, up from 41% in 2001.[50] This higher rate of completed postsecondary schooling among women was seen for First Nations, Métis and Inuit women.

While the percentage of Aboriginal women who had completed postsecondary schooling has increased, the gap between the percentages of Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women with postsecondary schooling remained. This is because the percentage of non-Aboriginal women with postsecondary education also increased in this time period (Chart 7).

Chart 7
Percentage of women aged 25 to 54 with postsecondary qualifications, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2001 and 2006



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006.

50. When comparisons are made to 2001, 2006 data have been adjusted to account for the addition of some Indian reserves and settlements that were incompletely enumerated in 2001. That is, only those Indian reserves that were enumerated in both census years (2006 and 2001) were included.

Residential school attendance

The residential school system operated across Canada between 1830 and the 1990s, peaking in 1931 when 80 residential schools were in operation. Residential schools were largely operated by churches in partnership with the federal government.[51]

The 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) asked respondents: Were you ever a student at a federal residential school or industrial school? They were also asked if they had any family members who were ever students at residential schools.

Among First Nations women living off reserve, 12% of those over the 25 years and over had attended residential school. Older First Nations women were more likely to have attended residential school; in 2006 about one in five First Nations women living off reserve 55 years of age and over had attended a residential school.

There is evidence that higher proportions of First Nations women living on reserve had attended residential school. The 2002/2003 Regional Health Survey found that on-reserve, 20% of First Nations women 18 years and over had attended a residential school.[52]

In 2006, 19% of Inuit women 25 years and over reported attending residential school. Inuit women between the ages of 45 and 54 were the most likely to have attended residential schools –40% of those 45 to 54 years and 31% of those 55 to 64 years reported attending a residential school.

Relatively few Métis women 25 years and over (3%) reported having attended residential school.

The last residential school for Aboriginal children in Canada closed in the 1990s but the impacts will affect many generations of First Nations peoples, their children and their communities.[53,54] Indeed of those 15 years and over, 34% of First Nations women living off reserve, 15% of Métis women and 21% of Inuit women reported having a parent or grandparent who attended residential school. It should be noted that many women reported that they did not know if their parents or grandparents had attended residential school (21% of First Nations women living off reserve, 21% of Inuit women and 27% of Métis women). Therefore, it is possible that the proportion with a parent or grandparent who had attended residential school is higher.

51. Aboriginal Healing Foundation. 2002. *The Healing Has Begun: An Operational Update from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation*.
52. First Nations Centre at the National Health Aboriginal Organization, on behalf of the First Nations Information Governance Centre. June 2006. *First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/2003: Report on Selected Indicators by Gender*. http://rhs-ersca/sites/default/files/ENpdf/RHS_2002/rhs2002-03-report_on_selected_indicators_by_gender.pdf (accessed May 27, 2011).
53. Dion Stout, M. and G. Kipling, on behalf of The Aboriginal Healing Foundation. 2003. *Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy*. http://www.ahf.ca/publications/research-series (accessed May 27, 2011).
54. Legacy of Hope Foundation. 2008. « Intergenerational impacts », *Where are the children — Healing of the legacy of the residential schools*, http://www.wherearethechildren.ca/en/exhibit/impacts.html (accessed June 28, 2011).

Spousal violence

Previous studies have shown that higher proportions of Aboriginal women experience spousal violence compared to non-Aboriginal women.[55,56,57] Higher rates of spousal violence among Aboriginal women may be due at least in part to the presence of certain risk factors. Aboriginal women are younger than the total Canadian population, they have lower average incomes, they have higher rates of alcohol abuse and are more likely to live in common-law unions.[58] Other factors that have been linked to violence in Aboriginal communities include the breakdown of family life resulting from residential school experience, and the impact of colonization on traditional values and culture.[59]

Through the General Social Survey (GSS) it is possible to examine spousal violence rates among Aboriginal people.[60] The GSS findings presented here are only for Aboriginal people living in the ten provinces.[61] It is important to note that most Inuit women live in the territories (in 2006 about 57% of Inuit women and girls were living in the territories).

In 2009, about 15%[E62] of Aboriginal women who had a spouse or common-law partner[63] reported that they had experienced spousal violence in the previous five years. In the case of non-Aboriginal women the proportion was 6% (Table 12).[64]

55. Brzozowski, J., A. Taylor-Butts and S.Johnson. June 2006. 'Victimization and Offending among the Aboriginal population in Canada'. *Juristat*. Volume 26, no. 3. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 85-002-XIE).
56. Brzozowski, J. and R. Brazeau. July 2008. 'What are the trends in self-reported spousal violence in Canada?' (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-630-X).
57. Perreault, S. March 2011. Violent Victimization of Aboriginal people in the Canadian provinces, 2009. *Juristat*. Volume 31, no. 1. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 85-002-X).
58. Johnson, H. October 2006. 'Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006'. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 85-570-XWE).
59 *ibid*: p. 14.
60. The question which was used to identify the Aboriginal population in the 2009 victimization survey is different than that used in 2004 and 1999. The 2009 results for the Aboriginal population should not, therefore, be directly compared with those from previous victimization surveys. Households in the ten provinces were selected by a telephone sampling method called Random Digit Dialling (RDD). Households without telephones or with only cellular phone service were excluded. It should be noted that the proportion of households with a landline telephone may be relatively low on some Indian reserves and settlements.
61. Information on victimization in the territories was collected using a different methodology and results will be published at a later date.
62. 'E' indicates that this estimate should be used with caution. See the Table 12 for more details.
63. Includes legally married, common-law and same-sex spouses, those separated from such unions and divorced spouses.
64. Brennan, S. May 2011. 'Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009'. *Juristat*. (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE).

Table 12
Self-reported spousal violence for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, aged 15 and over, Canada, 2009

Victims of spousal violence	Aboriginal women	Non-Aboriginal women
	percentage	
Percentage who reported being physically or sexually victimized by a spouse* in the previous 5 years	15 E	6
Of those who had been physically or sexually victimized by a spouse in the previous 5 years, percentage who reported that they:		
had been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife	48 E	32
sustained an injury	58	41
feared for their life	52 E	31

* significantly different from estimate for total Canadian women at p<0.05
Note: Includes legally married, common-law and same-sex spouses, those separated from such unions and divorced spouses.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009.

There is evidence that many Aboriginal women who are victims of spousal violence experience severe and potentially life threatening violence. In 2009, 58% of Aboriginal women who experienced spousal violence reported that they had sustained an injury compared to 41% of non-Aboriginal women. Almost half (48%) of Aboriginal women who had experienced spousal violence reported that they had been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a gun or knife. A similar proportion (52%) of Aboriginal women who had been victims of spousal violence reported that there were times when they feared for their life (Table 12).

About 38% of Aboriginal women who were victims of spousal violence reported that the incident came to the attention of the police. About one-third (31%) of those who said that the police found out about the violence contacted the police themselves.

Further, about one in three (34%) Aboriginal women in a marital or common-law relationship or who have had contact with an ex-partner in the previous five years reported that they had been emotionally or financially abused by their partner. Again, this was twice the percentage of non-Aboriginal women who reported being victims of emotional or financial abuse (17%). While significantly higher percentages of Aboriginal women reported being victims of spousal violence compared to Aboriginal men, similar percentages of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men reported being emotionally or financially abused by a spouse or partner (differences were not statistically significant).

Missing and murdered Aboriginal women

In recent years, it has come to light that many Aboriginal women in Canada have been murdered or have gone missing. For a number of reasons, these disappearances and homicides have been difficult to quantify through official statistics.[65]

The Homicide Survey collects information on many socio-demographic characteristics of homicide victims, including Aboriginal identity when known. It is important to note that in about half of all homicides the Aboriginal identity of the victim is reported by police as unknown. For example, in 2009, police reported 610 homicides. Of these, the victim was identified as Aboriginal in 62 homicides, as non-Aboriginal in 164 homicides, and as Aboriginal identity unknown in 384 homicides (Table 13).

Given that the Aboriginal identity of many homicide victims is unknown, it is likely that data from the Homicide Survey undercount the true extent of the homicide of Aboriginal people. Other research stemming from the Sisters in Spirit initiative has suggested that the number of Aboriginal women in Canada who have been murdered or have gone missing in the past 20 years may be in the hundreds[66].

Table 13
Homicide victims, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2009

Aboriginal identity	Number of victims
Aboriginal identity unknown	384
Non-Aboriginal	164
Aboriginal	62
Aboriginal female victims	16
Aboriginal male victims	46
Total victims	**610**

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey, 2009.

The data available show that Aboriginal people are more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Aboriginal people. While Aboriginal people represented about 4% of the total Canadian population in 2006 (the most recent population count available), 27% of homicide victims in 2009 (where the Aboriginal identity of the victim was known) were Aboriginal people. Among homicide victims that were reported to be Aboriginal people, 26% (16 victims) were women or girls (Table 13).

Because information about the Aboriginal identity of victims was unknown for such a large proportion of victims (63%), it was not possible to calculate a homicide rate for the Aboriginal population for 2009. However, previously released Aboriginal homicide rates have indicated that Aboriginal people are more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Aboriginal people. Between 1997 and 2000 the average homicide rate for Aboriginal people was 8.8 per 100,000 population, almost seven times higher than in the non-Aboriginal population (1.3 per 100,000 population). Between 1997 and 2000, an average of 18% of victims had an unknown Aboriginal status.[67]

65. Department of Justice Canada. 2010. "Government of Canada takes concrete action regarding missing and murdered Aboriginal women". News release. Ottawa, Canada. http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/news-nouv/nr-cp/2010/doc_32560.html (accessed February 9, 2011).
66. Native Women's Association of Canada. 2010. *Sisters in Spirit: 2010 Research Findings*, http://www.nwac.ca/sites/default/files/imce/2010_NWAC_SIS_Report_EN.pdf (accessed on February 9, 2011).
67. Brzozowski, J., A. Taylor-Butts and S. Johnson. June 2006. 'Victimization and Offending among the Aboriginal population in Canada'. *Juristat*. Volume 26, no. 3. (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE).

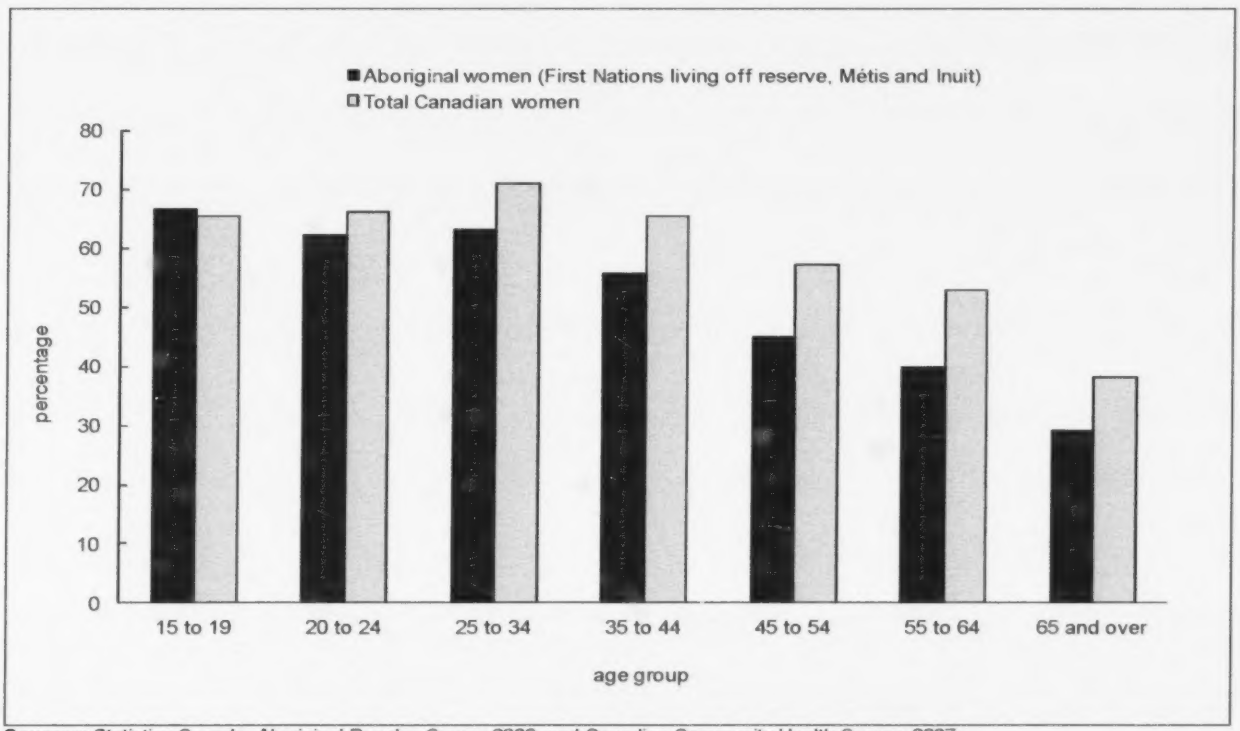
Between 1997 and 2000, the rate of homicide for Aboriginal females was 5.4 per 100,000 population, compared to 0.8 per 100,000 for non-Aboriginal victims (almost seven times higher). The rate of homicide was higher among Aboriginal male victims – 12.2 per 100,000 population compared to 1.8 for non-Aboriginal males.[68]

For more information, please see the chapter on women and the criminal justice system.

Health

In the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, among women 15 years and over, 50% of First Nations women living off reserve, 58% of Métis women and 48% of Inuit women self-reported that their health was either excellent or very good (Chart 8). The share of Aboriginal women describing their health in these terms was smaller than the figure for all Aboriginal men, 58% of whom described their health as excellent or very good. It was also smaller than the percentage of women in the total Canadian population who reported excellent or very good health (62%); age standardization was done to reflect to younger age structure of the Aboriginal population. Data for the total Canadian population comes from the 2007 Canadian Community Health Survey.

Chart 8
Percentage of women reporting excellent or very good health, by age group, Canada, 2006/2007



Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006, and Canadian Community Health Survey, 2007.

The gap between the self-perceived health ratings of Aboriginal women and the total Canadian female population widens with each age group. In 2006, the difference between the Aboriginal girls aged 15 to 19 (67%) and the total female population in the same age range (65%) who described their health as either excellent or very good was not statistically significant. In contrast, 40% of Aboriginal women aged 55 to 64 compared with 53% of all Canadian women in this age group reported their health as either excellent or very good; this is a gap of 13 percentage points. This trend is observed among all three Aboriginal groups (Chart 8).

68. *ibid.*

Métis women—Excerpt from 'Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: An overview of the Health of the Métis population'

In 2006, more than half of Métis adults (58%) stated that their health was excellent or very good; similar ratings were observed for men and women. Métis women were more likely (57%) than men (50%) to indicate they had at least one chronic condition. They were also more likely to report two or more chronic conditions (31%) relative to men (24%).

The chronic conditions that were reported more often by Métis women than men were arthritis and/or rheumatism (24% versus 18%), asthma (17% versus 11%), and bronchitis (8% versus 5%). Métis women and men reported similar rates of high blood pressure, ulcers, diabetes and heart problems.

Between 2001 and 2006, a small but increasing gap has developed between Métis men and women in terms of unmet health care needs. In 2001, the proportion of Métis women (12%) and men (11%) with unmet health care needs was about the same. However, in 2006, the figure declined to 9% for Métis men but was unchanged for women. A similar gap was observed in the total population of Canada in 2005 (men, 10%; women, 13%).

This gap may be partly accounted for by the differing experiences women have with health care utilization compared to men. For example, other research has found that men in the total population of Canada had significantly lower wait times than women when accessing diagnostic tests.[69]

Several reasons were provided by Métis adults to explain why they did not receive care when it was needed. The most commonly reported reasons for not receiving care included 'long wait times' (23%) and 'care not available at the time required' (12%). A smaller share of Métis reported that they didn't receive care because 'care was not available in their area' (7%) or they 'decided not to seek care' (7%). Reasons were similar for both men and women.

Living with chronic conditions

While most First Nations women (off reserve), Métis women and Inuit women reported their health status in generally positive terms, more than half reported a chronic health condition. In 2006, 60% of Aboriginal women aged 20 and over had been diagnosed with a chronic condition by a health professional. This compared with 52% of Aboriginal men.

The Aboriginal population structure is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. As a result, it is necessary to age standardize these two populations when making comparisons. In 2006, 46% of the non-Aboriginal population had been diagnosed with at least one chronic condition, compared to the figures of 51% for the off-reserve First Nations population, 50% for Métis and 39% for Inuit.[70]

69. Kazanjian, A., D. Morettin and R. Cho. August 2004. 'Health Care Utilization by Canadian Women,' *BMC Women's Health 4* (Suppl 1:S33).
70. Garner, R., G. Carrière and C. Sanmartin. June 2010. *The Health of First Nations Living Off-reserve, Inuit, and Métis Adults in Canada : The Impact of Socio-economic Status on Inequalities in Health*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 82-622-X).

Aboriginal men were less likely to have been diagnosed with chronic conditions compared to women. In 2006, 61% of First Nations women aged 20 and over living off reserve had been diagnosed by a health professional with one or more chronic conditions, compared to 53% of their male counterparts. For Métis women and men, these figures were 60% and 53%.

In 2006, 51% of Inuit women had been diagnosed by a health professional with a chronic condition, compared to 39% of Inuit men. It is possible that these relatively low percentages of diagnosis with chronic conditions are linked to the poorer access to health professionals in Inuit Nunangat, where most Inuit live.[71]

As with the overall female population, the percentage of Aboriginal women with a chronic condition rises in the older age groups. Indeed, in 2006, 88% of First Nations women aged 65 and over living off reserve had been diagnosed by a health professional with at least one chronic health condition, as had 92% of Métis senior women and 89% of Inuit senior women (differences are not statistically significant).

Inuit women—Excerpt from: 'Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: Inuit Health and Social Conditions'

For adults in all age groups, Inuit were less likely to report excellent or very good health than were their counterparts in the total Canadian population. There were no differences between Inuit men and women. About 50% of Inuit adults stated that their health was excellent or very good in 2006.

Inuit in all age groups were less likely than those in the general population to have seen or talked on the phone with a medical doctor in the 12 months prior to the survey. About 56% of Inuit adults had contact with a medical doctor, compared with 79% in the general population (after standardizing for age).

In most Inuit communities, the point of first contact with the medical system was with a nurse. In the year prior to the survey, 7 in 10 Inuit adults living in Inuit communities had contact with a nurse.

About 10% of Inuit adults in Inuit Nunangat stated there was a time they required health care but did not receive it, about the same percentage as for Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat. However, reasons for not receiving care were different. For Inuit outside Inuit Nunangat, the most frequent reason given was long wait times. In Inuit Nunangat, this was also one of the most frequent responses, although a similar percentage of respondents also cited the lack of availability of care in the area, or at the time required.

Some Inuit are required to leave their communities for extended periods to receive health care. About 5% of Inuit adults in Inuit Nunangat stated there had been a time during the year before the survey when they had been temporarily away from their home for one month or more due to illness.

About 58% of Inuit adults smoked on a daily basis, and another 8% smoked occasionally. The daily rate was over three times the 17% among all adults in Canada, according to the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey.

71. Tait, H. December 2008. *Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006: Inuit Health and Social Conditions*. (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-637-X – No. 001).

Arthritis or rheumatism the most common chronic condition among Aboriginal women

As with the overall population, arthritis or rheumatism was the most common chronic condition diagnosed among Aboriginal women. Among each Aboriginal group (First Nations women living off reserve, Métis and Inuit women), the order in prevalence of specific chronic conditions was the same (arthritis and rheumatism was most common, followed by high blood pressure and asthma (Table 14).

Table 14
Unadjusted and age-standardized prevalence of diagnosed chronic conditions for women aged 20 years and over, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006/2007

Chronic condition	Unadjusted				Age-standardized to age structure of total Canadian population				
	Total Aboriginal women [1]	First Nations women living off reserve	Métis women	Inuit women	Total Canadian women	Total Aboriginal women [1]	First Nations women living off reserve	Métis women	Inuit women
	percentage								
Arthritis or rheumatism	27.2	28.2	26.6	19.2	20.5	33.1 *	33.3 *	32.8 *	28.5 *
High blood pressure (hypertension)	17.1	17.6	17.3	13.7	18.9	22.0 *	21.9 *	22.6 *	19.7
Asthma	15.8	16.2	16.1	10.5	9.0	15.8 *	15.9 *	16.1 *	12.4 *
Stomach problems or intestinal ulcers [2]	14.4	14.6	14.4	10.1	3.3	15.6 *	15.6 *	15.6 *	11.4 *
Diabetes	8.4	9.6	7.5	5.6	5.8	11.1 *	12.0 *	10.0 *	9.7 *
Heart problems	7.6	7.8	7.5	6.5	4.7	9.8 *	9.5 *	9.8 *	8.8 *
Cancer	4.5	4.2	5.3	3.7 E	1.6	5.6 *	5.0 *	6.7 *	5.3 E *

* significantly different from estimate for total Canadian women at $p<0.05$

1. Total Aboriginal women includes First Nations women living off reserve, Métis women and Inuit women.
2. The 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents if they had 'stomach problems or intestinal ulcers' while the Canadian Community Health Survey 2007 asked respondents if they had 'intestinal or stomach ulcers'.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006, and Canadian Community Health Survey, 2007.

In 2006, 28% of First Nations women aged 20 and over living off reserve had been diagnosed with arthritis or rheumatism. About 18% had high blood pressure, 16% had asthma, 15% had stomach problems or intestinal ulcers, and 10% had diabetes.

Among Métis women aged 20 and over, arthritis and rheumatism was the most commonly diagnosed chronic condition (27%). This was followed by high blood pressure (17%), asthma (16%), stomach problems or intestinal ulcers (14%), heart problems (7%) and diabetes (7%).

In 2006, nearly one-fifth (19%) of Inuit women had been diagnosed with arthritis or rheumatism while 14% had been diagnosed with high blood pressure. One in ten Inuit women were also diagnosed with asthma (10%) and stomach problems or ulcers (10%).

There is higher prevalence of these chronic conditions (arthritis/rheumatism, high blood pressure, asthma, heart conditions, diabetes) among Aboriginal women compared to women in the overall population. For example, while 1 in 5 Canadian women 20 years and over have been diagnosed with arthritis/rheumatism, about 1 in 3 First Nations women living off reserve and Métis women are living with this chronic condition (age standardized to the total Canadian age structure). The only exception is high blood pressure/hypertension where the differences in prevalence among Inuit women and all Canadian women were not statistically significant (Table 14).

Contact with health care professionals

As with the overall population, Aboriginal women were generally more likely than their male counterparts to have contact with health professionals. In 2006, 77% of Aboriginal women (excluding First Nations women living on reserve) reported that they had seen or talked to a family doctor or general practitioner in the 12 months prior to the survey, whereas 62% of Aboriginal men had done so (excluding First Nations men living on reserve).

Roughly equal proportions of senior men and women in the off-reserve First Nations population, in the Inuit population and in the Métis population had contact with a family doctor or general practitioner in the previous year. Among younger people, however, women were more likely to have had contact with a doctor. In 2006, among those aged 15 to 24 years, 71% of First Nations women living off reserve had seen or talked to a family doctor compared to 47% of First Nations men living off reserve. Among Métis aged 15 to 24 years, 69% of women and 47% of men had contact with a family doctor. While 55% of Inuit women between 15 and 24 years had seen or talked to a family doctor, the same was true of 38% of Inuit men in the same age group (Table 15).

Table 15
Percentage population aged 15 years and over, who had contact with a family doctor or general practitioner in the previous 12 months, by Aboriginal identity and age group, Canada, 2006

Age group	Total Aboriginal population	First Nations (off-reserve)	Métis	Inuit
	percentage			
Total population	**70.0**	**71.3**	**70.8**	**53.3**
15 to 24	57.7	59.2	58.9	46.1
25 to 34	66.4	67.2	67.8	48.9
35 to 44	69.9	71.7	69.4	54.8
45 to 54	76.8	77.7	77.6	59.5
55 to 64	82.7	85.6	80.9	65.6
65 and over	84.6	83.2	87.5	74.0
Females	**76.8**	**77.5**	**77.9**	**59.8**
15 to 24	68.6	70.7	69.2	54.9
25 to 34	75.1	75.2	77.4	57.5
35 to 44	76.0	77.2	76.5	60.1
45 to 54	80.9	80.3	82.4	64.2
55 to 64	86.0	87.0	86.1	70.0
65 and over	84.5	83.1	87.1	70.0
Males	**62.1**	**63.6**	**63.0**	**46.3**
15 to 24	46.1	47.2	47.2	37.6
25 to 34	55.4	56.5	55.9	39.7
35 to 44	62.3	64.9	60.9	47.7
45 to 54	71.8	74.3	72.3	54.5
55 to 64	78.9	83.6	76.1	60.9
65 and over	84.7	83.4	87.9	76.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal People's Survey, 2006.

Where Aboriginal women live has an impact on their contact with health professionals. For example, the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey found that 46% of Inuit women living in Inuit Nunangat had seen or talked on the telephone with a family doctor or general practitioner, compared with 79% of First Nations women not living on reserve and 78% of Métis women. In contrast, Inuit women living in Inuit Nunangat were much more likely to have had contact with nurses as opposed to other types of health professionals. These differences are likely due to the type of health care professionals available to people living in Inuit Nunangat.[72]

72. *ibid.*

Glossary of terms

Age standardization – A statistical technique that removes the effects of differences in the age structure of populations, allowing populations with different age structures to be compared to each other. Differences between populations may be exaggerated or obscured when age standardization is not undertaken.

Aboriginal people – In this report, refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.

First Nations – The term 'First Nations' is used throughout the article to refer to people who identified as North American Indian. 'A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word 'Indian', which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term 'First Nations peoples' refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Some Indian peoples have also adopted the term 'First Nation' to replace the word 'band' in the name of their community.[73]

Indian or North American Indian – See First Nations

Indian Act – The *Indian Act* is Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, that sets out certain federal government obligations, and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands.

Inuit – Inuit means "people" in the Inuit language. Most Inuit live in the Inuvialuit region of Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik in Northern Quebec and Nunatsiavut in Labrador. Inuk is the singular form of the word Inuit (i.e. 'a person')

Inuit Nunangat – Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of **Inuit** of Canada. It includes communities in Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region (Northwest Territories). These regions collectively encompass the area traditionally used and occupied by Inuit in Canada.

Life expectancy – Life expectancy is the average number of years of life remaining at birth or at another age.

Métis – The Métis are people of mixed North American Indian or Inuit and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from North American Indian people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

Non-Status Indian – A non-Status Indian is a person who identifies as First Nations or North American Indian but is not registered under the *Indian Act*.

Registered Indian – A Status or Registered Indian is a person who is registered under the *Indian Act*. The act sets out the requirements for determining who is a Status Indian.

Status Indian – A Status or Registered Indian is a person who is registered under the *Indian Act*. The act sets out the requirements for determining who is a Status Indian.

Treaty Indian – A Treaty Indian is a Status or Registered Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

73. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Communications Branch. 2002. *Words First – An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples of Canada*.